

Saudi troops ready to act against Iranian pilgrims

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Saudi troops took up positions on Sunday outside the headquarters of Iranian pilgrims in Mecca in an attempt to prevent traditional anti-U.S. demonstrations. The official Iranian news agency IRNA said.

"Saudi security forces and soldiers have deployed in front of the headquarters of the (Iranian) representation in Mecca, where the annual Hajj began Thursday, IRNA said.

However, witnesses said the level of security outside the Iranian compound was not out of the ordinary.

Members of the special pilgrimage police force and Interior Ministry troops were deployed at the site, but the rank-and-file were armed only with wooden clubs and only the officers carried handguns, the witnesses said.

Despite repeated warnings from Saudi Arabia, Iranian pilgrims said Friday they would go ahead with their disavowal of the pagans rally, during which they chant slogans against the United States and Israel.

The head of Iran's 73,000 pilgrims in Mecca, Mohammad Mohammadi Rey Shahr, told IRNA that the demonstration would be held "with all its splendour" on Sunday — the sixth day of the lunar month.

However, Mr. Shahr said the demonstrations could be held outside of Mecca in either Mount Arafat or Mina, nearby stations on the pilgrimage.

Since its 1979 Islamic revolution, Tehran has regularly called for pilgrims to organise disavowal-of-the-unbeliev-

ers demonstrations in Mecca against the United States and Israel.

Saudi Arabia, which is hosting nearly two million pilgrims this year, strictly prohibits them from holding any political demonstrations.

In the past, Iranian demonstrations have resulted in clashes between pilgrims and Saudi police. In 1987, more than 400 people died in such incidents.

The Iranian government did not explicitly call on its pilgrims to demonstrate this year, unlike previous years, amid warming relations between Tehran and Riyadh.

Iran said Sunday that officials in Saudi Arabia prevented Iran from setting up field hospitals for its pilgrims.

The IRNA quoted the head of Iran's medical team, Shahabeddin Sadr, as saying Saudi authorities blocked his workers from setting up medical centers in Mina and Arafat, on the plains outside the Holy City of Mecca.

It said the Saudi officials told Mr. Sadr that the kingdom would provide any needed medical care.

However, the Islamic republic has since found itself plunged in a new crisis with the West, after a German court implicated its leaders in the 1992 assassinations of Kurdish dissidents in Berlin (see story on page 12).

Every Muslim must make the pilgrimage to Mecca, birthplace of the Prophet Mohammad, at least once in his life if he can afford it.

Egypt to deport Algerian woman suspected of militant connection

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt's state security prosecution has ordered that an Algerian woman accused of aiding Muslim militants be deported Sunday.

Police said that Gamila Ma'ly Al Faky would be sent to Algeria after money found at her house was returned to her.

She was being held at the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for internal security, prior to deportation.

Ms. Al Faky was arrested on March 19 in a poor Cairo neighborhood after police alleged they observed her making contacts with lawyers who have ties to extremists, the Ministry of Interior said.

It said the woman was supposed to carry money and instructions to lawyers working with the Jihad group.

The group has been blamed for some of the violence in a five-year campaign by Muslim militants to overthrow Egypt's secular government and replace it with strict Islamic rule.

More than 1,075 people have died in the violence, most of them police and extremists. The ministry alleged that Ms. Al Faky was working for Muslim activist Yasser Tawfiq Al Siri, who lives in exile in London.

Mr. Al Siri said he doesn't know the woman and charged that the action against her was aimed at pressuring Britain to deport him.

Mr. Al Siri is wanted by Egypt for alleged involvement in a 1995 assassination attempt on then Prime Minister Atef Sedki.

Egyptian officials have long blamed foreign countries for harboring militants intent on overthrowing the government.

Ms. Al Faky was married to an Egyptian, but now is divorced. The couple had five children who have Egyptian nationality and are expected to remain in the country.



CHILD LABOUR IN ARAB WORLD: Egyptian children work on fixing a car engine at one of Cairo's mechanic shops on Sunday. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) said that about 11 per cent of Egypt's workers are children between the ages of 10 and 14, which makes it the 15th largest country having child labour in the world (AFP photo)

Seven killed in Algerian attack

ALGIERS (AFP) — Seven civilians were killed in an overnight attack south of Algiers by an armed anti-government group, the press here reported Sunday.

The victims were transporting cattle late Thursday when they were stopped at a roadblock set up on one of the country's most feared routes between Blida and Medea, a zone where Muslim militant groups such as the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) are very active.

They were killed and then robbed of their money, the Al Khabar newspaper said. Separately, five guerrillas were reported to have been killed by security forces in the region of Dellys, east of the capital. Another two were killed in Tiaret by vigilantes who have sprung up in response to the armed threat, the newspaper Liberte said.

The civilian killings were part of a wave of massacres attributed to Islamic militants which have cost the lives of some 140 people in the past 10 days.

The most recent of these was overnight Friday when 22 people in the village of Douar

Mena were shot or hacked to death, many of them women and children. A 14-year-old girl was decapitated in the massacre.

The children whose parents were killed have since been taken to a nursery in nearby Boufarik.

On its front page Sunday, the daily La Tribune published the picture of one of them — an eight-year-old baby which was injured after it fell from its mother's arms during the attack.

The killing spree was followed by a car bomb in Algiers which claimed the lives of four more people.

In total, more than 50,000 people have been killed in Algeria since 1992 in violence that human rights groups blame on both the militants and the security forces.

The guerrillas have fought for the overthrow of the military-backed government since it cancelled 1992 elections an Islamic party was set to win.

Christians claim Holy City Waqf infringed on church property

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A Greek Orthodox Church official on Sunday accused the Islamic religious authority of breaking into the patriarchate in Arab East Jerusalem and taking over two rooms.

The official said if the patriarchate and the Islamic Waqf failed to resolve their disputes bilaterally, the patriarchate would ask for arbitration by Israel.

Islamic Waqf officials said they opposed the intervention of the Israeli occupation authorities in the dispute.

"During renovation on a mosque and areas around it by the Islamic Waqf, workers broke a wall between the Muslim area and the patriarchate last week and entered two rooms of the patriarchate," said Metropolitan Timothy, patriarchate secretary.

"They took over the two rooms and moved everything in those rooms to another room and also broke the doors," the metropolitan told Reuters.

The patriarchate is located near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the walled Old City of Jerusalem, which Israel occupied in the 1967 war.

The metropolitan said the patriarchate owned the rooms "for centuries and this is the first time we have such disputes

with the Islamic Waqf." Adnan Al Hussein, director of the Waqf, denied it had taken over the rooms and said the dispute was being exaggerated.

"It is simply a dispute over a joint wall separating the Waqf property and the patriarchate," Mr. Hussein said.

"We have set up a committee from both sides to solve the problem in an amicable manner as we always do with our brethren the Christians and both of us have agreed not to allow the intervention of the Israeli authorities," he told Reuters.

Mr. Hussein said the Palestinian National Authority, which controlled the Waqf, did not intervene in the dispute and "would accept any solution we reach with the patriarchate."

But Metropolitan Timothy said the Patriarchate had already informed the Israeli government about the matter. "We will try to solve the problem in a friendly manner, but if we fail, we will seek arbitration from the Israeli government," he said.

Israeli officials were not available for comment.

U.S. Air Force says White not responsible in Saudi bombing

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Air Force reevaluated a report on a bombing in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 American airmen and came to the same conclusion, officials say: the commanding general was not negligent in protecting his base.

Potentially, the finding puts new Defence Secretary William Cohen in the sensitive position of having to act on an issue requiring him to weigh the wishes of Congress against those of senior military officers.

John White, the Pentagon's second ranking official, demanded the review of the Air Force's initial report in February. A Pentagon official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Saturday that the Air Force sent Mr. White a draft report reaffirming the finding.

The first study concluded that Brigadier General Terry Schwalier had done more than could have been expected of him to ensure the safety of the men and women at the Dhahran complex, known as Khobar Towers.

"There is no change from the first report," said the source, who is knowledgeable about its contents. "It repeats the same conclusion."

Another military source, also speaking privately, said the latest version of the Air Force report insists

Gen. Schwalier "did everything he could have, and that what he did was reasonable and prudent to ensure the safety of his people, based on the intelligence... available to him at the time."

Gen. Schwalier was wing commander for the unit in Saudi Arabia, which flew flight-interdiction missions over southern Iraq.

Such a stand by the Air Force lobs a decision on the matter directly into the lap of the Pentagon's top civilian leaders.

Members of Congress are demanding more accountability for the losses in the June 1996 attack. Military officers want some understanding of their position of being required to be diplomats, warriors and intelligence officers in countries such as Saudi Arabia where their activities are strictly limited.

Even Attorney General Janet Reno and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Lois Freeh have complained about a lack of cooperation from Saudi officials with FBI attempts to investigate the bombing. No one has been charged in the attack.

The Air Force's first internal study was done after an independent Pentagon commission led by a retired army general singled out Gen. Schwalier for blame. It said Gen.

Schwalier failed to respond adequately to clear danger signs that an attack was possible at the apartment complex.

The Air Force report could yet again be overruled by Pentagon civilian leaders.

The service's top officer, Gen. Ronald Fogleman, has staked his future on backing his man. Gen. Fogleman, the Air Force chief of staff, has repeatedly come out behind Gen. Schwalier, who now holds a leading job in the Air Force operations staff.

As competition heats up for a successor to Gen. John Shalikashvili, Gen. Fogleman is often named as a primary candidate. But the Schwalier matter has been cited as dimming Gen. Fogleman's chances, given the pressure on Capitol Hill to place blame for the bombing.

In February, Gen. Fogleman told Congress he strongly opposes punishing anyone under his command for the strike.

"Based on my military judgement, we have a situation where I cannot in my mind justify any kind of action against anybody in that chain of command," Gen. Fogleman said. "It was an act of war. It was an act of war after somebody had implemented 132 changes" to improve security.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 77311-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Captain Planet
14:30Flintstones
15:00French Programmes
16:00Nature's Inventions
16:25Deep Water Haven
16:50Series — Ocean Girl
17:20 Doc. — Extra Dimensions
18:00French Programmes
19:30News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — One Foot in the Grave
20:00 Doc. — Secrets of Science
20:30 Drama — Murder She Wrote
21:10Drama — Highlander
22:00News in English
22:25Under Suspicion
23:15Middle March

PRAYER TIMES

04:43Fajr
06:04(Sunrise) Duha
12:36Dhuhr
16:12Asr
19:08Maghreb
20:28Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish. Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775361

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to drop slightly and humidity to rise.

Clouds will build up with a chance of showers, and winds northwesterly moderate to active.

In Aqaba, it will be relatively warm, winds northerly moderate

and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.

Amman.....14/23

Aqaba.....18/28

Desert.....13/25

Jordan Valley.....16/27

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 27, Aqaba 37 Humidity

readings: Amman 22 per cent,

Aqaba 20 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Chaleh Zawadeh.....736011

Dr. Jihad Sammour.....765018

Dr. Hisham Kan'an.....790286

Dr. Khalid Asfour.....699440

Firas pharmacy.....661912

Ferdows pharmacy.....778336

Al Asema pharmacy.....637055

Nairokh pharmacy.....623672

Al Salam pharmacy.....636730

Yacoub pharmacy.....644945

Shmeisani pharmacy.....637660

Najib pharmacy.....847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh.....250080

Al Quds pharmacy.....636381

RJ Flight Information.....08-53200

ZARQA:

Dr. Akram Haddad.....985550

Khalifeh pharmacy.....985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....637111

Civil Defence Department.....661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue.....630341

Civil Defence.....607071

Emergency.....199

Rescue Police.....192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade.....617101

Blood Bank.....775121

Highway Police.....843402

Traffic Police.....896390

Public Security Dept.....630321

Hotel Complaints.....605800

Price Complaints.....661176

Water & Sewerage Complaints.....897467

Amman Municipality Complaints.....787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance).....121

Overseas Calls.....010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs.....623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs.....661101

Jordan Television.....773111

Radio Jordan.....774111

Water Authority.....680100

J. Electricity Authority.....815615

Electric Power Co.....636381

RJ Flight Information.....08-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre.....813813/32

Khalidi Maternity.....64281/6

Akileh Maternity.....642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity.....642362

Malhas, J. Amman.....636140

Palestine, Shmeisani.....607071

Shmeisani Hospital.....669131

University Hospital.....845845

Al-Muasher Hospital.....667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali.....666126/27

Al-Ahli, Abdali.....664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen.....777101/3

Al-Bashir.....775111/26

Army, Marka.....891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital.....602240/50

Amal Hospital.....674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery.....865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital.....09/983323

Zarqa National Hospital.....09/900560

Ibn Sina Hospital.....09/986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital.....09/990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital.....02/275555

Greek Catholic Hospital.....04/40 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

02/272725

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital.....02/247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital.....03/314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

09:00Damasus (RJ)

09:30Sanaa (RJ)

10:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

11:05Beirut (RJ)

17:20London (RJ)

17:30Cairo (RJ)

19:30Bangkok (RJ)

21:00New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

23:10Casablanca (RJ)

23:20Frankfurt, Milan, Aqaba (add) (RJ)

04:40 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights

10:30Cairo (MS)

14:30Bahrain (GF)

15:05Vienna (OS)

21:10Paris, Damasus (AF)

21:30Tel Aviv (LY)

Crown Prince receives UAE dignitary

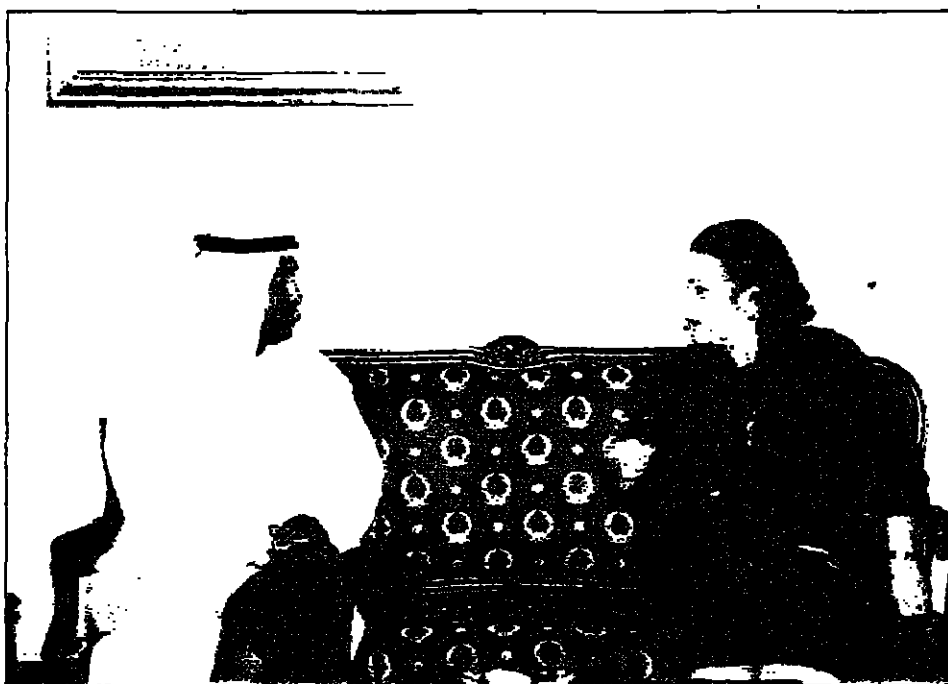
AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan Sunday received Sheikh Sultan Ben Khalifa Ben Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the two discussed bilateral relations and means of their further enhancement.

The meeting was also attended by the Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khasawneh.

Sheikh Sultan, who is the chief of the Abu Dhabi crown prince's court, and president of the Equestrian Federation, also visited Um Qais in the north of the Kingdom, where he was briefed by a military commander on the strategic importance of the area as well as its importance as an archaeological site.

He was accompanied by HRH Princess Alia Bent Al Hussein and her husband Mohammad Al Saleh Al Kloub.

On Saturday, Sheikh Sultan was received by His Majesty King Hussein in which meeting he relayed a message from the UAE leader Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan, covering



Following a meeting with HRH Crown Prince Hassan, HRH Princess Alia Bent Al Hussein Sunday confers with Sheikh Sultan Ben Khalifa Ben Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates (Petra photo)

bilateral relations and issues of common concern. The audience was attended by HRH Prince Hamzeh Ben Al Hussein.

Later Sunday, Sheikh Sultan left Amman at the end

of his two-day official visit to Jordan.

He was seen off by Princess Alia and the UAE Ambassador to Jordan Ahmad Ali Za'abi.

In a departure statement,

Sheikh Sultan affirmed that an Arabian horse race will be soon held in Jordan with a competition to be held in Amman to select the most beautiful, original Arabian horses.

Council of professional associations presidents meets with premier

AMMAN (J.T.) — A committee representing the council of presidents of professional associations in Jordan Sunday met with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali who stated that the government is duly considering engineers' demands for better pay, an issue which triggered various protests last February.

At the time, the Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) held sit-ins and threatened a general strike if government-employed engineers did not receive allowances of 180 per cent on their salaries, up from 120 per cent as offered by the previous government.

At the time, the engineers maintained that they would refrain from striking for two months, March and April, to give the government time to take a decision regarding their demands.

Chairman of the Presidents of the Professional Associations Abdul Rahim Issa maintained that the delegation discussed the question of allowances for all the members of professional associations, concentrating on the engineers.

He cited the prime minister as having reiterated the government's concern over the issue.

Dr. Issa stated that Dr. Majali reminded the professional delegation that a ministerial committee, chaired by Justice Minister Riad Shakaa, has been reviewing the issue and that he promised to discuss it with the ministerial committee.

During last February's



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali meets Sunday with the council of presidents of professional associations to discuss allowances for members of professional associations (photo by Yousef Allan)

protests, JEA Vice President Hosni Abu Ghida stated that engineers are merely demanding their legitimate rights.

He maintained that the previous government had promised to amend regulations regarding the allowances but had done nothing to address the engineers' grievances.

According to Dr. Issa, the second subject discussed with the prime minister at Sunday's meeting was the question of amending laws and regulations concerning all members of professional unions.

He said that the prime minister reaffirmed that the coming general elections will be based on the one-

person, one-vote system and that the government decision on this matter is final.

Dr. Majali told a press conference Saturday that elections will take place between July and November.

Following the meeting, Jordan Press Association (JPA) President Saif Sharif, who also attended the meeting, said that Dr. Majali promised that the government would continue to seek land near Al Hussein Sports City for the association premises.

The question of general elections was earlier discussed in a Senate meeting during which Dr. Majali maintained that the govern-

ment is examining all aspects of an election law which results are to be announced by the government following intensive study.

Dr. Majali affirmed that the government would consult with various political groups and consider their views before deciding upon the form the law would take.

The premier is slated to meet with the Lower House today to review local, regional and international issues as well as hearing the deputies' views on the latest developments in the region and outlining the government's domestic policies.

Jordan fares well in family planning survey

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In an international survey entitled "Contraceptive Choice: Worldwide Access to Family Planning," Jordan fared well among developing countries in terms of availability of contraceptive methods.

According to the survey, conducted by Population Action International (PAI), which ranked 88 developing countries and 39 developed countries, Jordan ranked in the second category ("good") and 31st among the 88 developing countries surveyed regarding access to modern contraceptive methods.

The categories were: "very good," "good," "fair," "poor," "very poor" as tabulated by a PAI chart which indicated access to modern contraceptive methods.

The study highlighted progress made in developing countries since 1982, as well as large gaps remaining in the availability of some contraceptive methods in both developed and developing countries.

In a press release published by PAI, poor access and a narrow range of contraceptive methods available in many developing countries are key obstacles to family planning and improving women's health.

Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Tunisia — with

100 points each — led developing countries in access to the five most widely used contraceptive methods: condoms, oral contraception, intrauterine devices (IUD), female sterilisation and vasectomies.

At the other end of the scale are Mali, Mauritania, Laos, Chad and the Congo, where, according to the survey, couples have virtually no access to any modern contraceptive method and maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world.

According to the survey, over 100 million married women of childbearing age in developing countries are considered to have an "unmet need" for family planning, "since they say they want to postpone or end childbearing but are not currently using a contraceptive method."

However, the study revealed that due to both public and private family planning efforts, a great deal has been accomplished in the past thirty years.

Today, the PAI study reported, over half of all couples in developing countries use contraception as compared to one in ten couples in the 1960s.

On average, the study added, couples are having between three and four children as compared to more than six children 30 years ago.

Despite this progress, the study maintained that many couples in developing countries still lack access to a full range of contraceptive meth-

ods. The study recommended several strategies to policy makers in developing countries, urging them to remove medical and policy barriers limiting access and choice of methods. The strategies are as follows:

- Furthering health and family planning networks especially in Africa where access to health care is limited.
- Helping to ensure affordability of contraceptive methods by subsidising the cost of methods or services.
- Educating people regarding the availability of family planning methods and investing in contraceptive research and development.

In developed countries, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, all scoring 100 points, led the developed countries in access to the six contraceptive methods.

The United States ranked sixth, followed by Norway, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Armenia ranked lowest among the developed countries, behind Japan, Romania, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

The PAI seeks to increase political and financial support for effective population programmes grounded in individual rights. It is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1965 and supported through contributions from individuals and foundations.

Department announces seizure of firearms

AMMAN (Petra) — The Anti-Corruption Department Sunday announced that last month its teams seized a large number of unlicensed firearms which had been smuggled into Jordan and illegally offered for sale.

It claimed to have apprehended five firearms merchants caught peddling the illicit merchandise.

The announcement noted that a total of 118 firearms ranging from revolvers to hunting guns as well as large quantities of ammunition

were found in the possession of these merchants.

The announcement also stated that department teams confiscated a number of signalling pistols together with materials utilised in transforming them into genuine fire arms.

The department described the signalling pistols as cheaply attained and therefore offering profits in their conversion.

Earlier Sunday, a spokesman for the Public Security Department (PSD) announced that two of its

personnel were wounded in an exchange of gunfire Saturday night between the badia police force and smugglers at the Al Raqbah district close to the borders Jordan shares with Iraq and Syria.

The PSD affirmed that several suspects were arrested for questioning and that three vehicles were impounded and found to have stored a large amount of smuggled cigarettes, twenty sewing machines, seven automatic guns and a rifle.

The two wounded personnel were First Lieutenant Abdul Muti Khalidi and Corporal Abdul Rahman Falah both of whose general conditions were listed as fair.

The spokesman said that a large badia police force was called to search the area where they found the three vehicles with the smuggled merchandise.

Investigations are underway.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali meets Sunday with the Senate to discuss the current election law and the government's examination thereof (photo by Yousef Allan)

Premier assures government support for university

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Sunday promised representatives of a group planning to establish a university in the Aqaba region all possible government support.

The delegation briefed Dr. Majali on the projected institution, the American University of Jordan, saying work is expected to start before the end of the year.

The team included officials from the Higher Council of Science and Technology (HCST) and three officials from the American University of Spalding in Kentucky, led by Dr. Thomas Oates.

In briefing the prime minister, the delegation said that university curriculae will concentrate on Jordan's particular needs for various specialisations.

Dr. Majali urged Jordanian universities and research centres to cooperate with the new university through the exchange of expertise and scientific information to help achieve its objectives.

The plans stipulate the building of the new institution in the village of Taybeh near Petra.

Subsequent to the meeting, head of the HCST National Centre for



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Sunday meets with group planning for a new university in the Aqaba region (Petra photo)

Human Resources Development Dr. Victor Billeh said that the construction of the university is expected to cost between \$200 and \$300 million. He added that the project would be financed by contributions from Jordan, the United States and other sources.

He said that Dr. Oates and his team are serving as consultants, and that the university will teach biology and other sciences, agriculture, and humanities as well as

hotel management, environmental science, business administration and subjects related to energy and water resources.

Dr. Billeh said the university would have an enrolment of around 10,000 students when fully operational.

The American delegation met with Jordanian academics and visited the site of the project where Aqaba Regional Authority President Faysal Khasawneh said that 200 dunums of land in the

southern coast of Aqaba have been allotted for the new university. He described the new university as a non-profit institution serving Jordanians and students from other countries.

According to Secretary General of the Ministry of Higher Education Ahmad Hisban, the Council of Higher Education, earlier gave its consent for the establishment of the university which will be under the supervision of the HCST.

WHAT'S GOING ON

GUITAR CONCERT

* Guitar concert by Spanish guitarist Armando Orbon at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

FILM

* "Borsalino" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 8:30 p.m.

BALLET

* Ballet dances by students of the Ahllyeh School for Girls at the Royal Cultural Centre at 6:00 p.m.

LECTURES

* "Information: Tourism, an Alternative to Traditional Tourism" (in Arabic) by Mr. Kamal Jreisat at the Friends of Archaeology Centre at 6:30 p.m. (Tel. 696682).

* "Biodiversity and Protected Areas in Jordan" by Dr. Adnan Budeiri at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UAE health official visits Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Health Undersecretary Saud Qasimi arrived here Sunday for a two-day visit to Jordan, during which he is slated to hold talks with Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi regarding bilateral cooperation in the field of health. They will also discuss increasing UAE purchases of Jordanian medicines. Dr. Qasimi praised the quality of Jordanian medicine, citing its "competitive prices" as giving it an edge over other imported medications. Dr. Qasimi is to visit several hospitals and health centres to obtain first-hand information on the level of services provided.

Decree names acting foreign minister

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued Sunday naming Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawe' as acting minister of foreign affairs during the absence of Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Tarawneh who is abroad.

Minister affirms support for PSD

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid Sunday affirmed that his ministry would provide support for the Public Security Department (PSD) to enable it to continue to perform its role in safeguarding security and stability and ensuring adherence to the law.

Major cheered by new polls

LONDON (R) — Prime Minister John Major said Sunday he could "taste the changing mood" in Britain as new polls showed a slip in support for the opposition Labour Party ahead of next month's election.

Labour leader Tony Blair conceded the Conservatives were "snapping at our heels" but was adamant that power, elusive for the past 18 years, could finally be won now that Labour had moved to the centre of the political arena.

"The Tories are snapping at our heels," Mr. Blair told the Sunday Times. "But they are not influencing the two fundamental questions people are asking: Do the Tories deserve another five years, and is new Labour new?"

Mr. Blair, emerging from what the media has dubbed a "wobbly week" in the election campaign, said the Conservatives were trying to smear his party as un-

trustworthy but that such "cynical" politics would not wash.

"There are many people who will vote for us who, if you had told them that five years ago, would have said it was impossible," he told the newspaper.

But some people are having fresh doubts about Labour as the actual vote looms closer, according to the pollsters.

A Gallup poll in the Sunday Telegraph gave Labour a 16 point lead over the Conservatives, down seven from a week ago.

An ICM poll in the Observer also put Labour 16 points ahead of the Conservatives: Unchanged from the previous week.

And a NOP poll for the Sunday Times, gave Labour a 20-point lead, down four points from last week.

While Labour's lead remains strong — pundits say it is unbeatable — Mr. Major seized on the drift in

support as proof that this election, just like the last, could be won from behind.

"Somebody once said in politics, when the ball rolls your way — grab it," Major told the Sunday Express newspaper.

"I can taste the changing mood," he crowed.

Mr. Major, long dogged by an image of spinelessness, was in fighting form in the interview, saying he had worked hard to win the premiership and would be a formidable leader if reelected.

So how would he feel if returned to office next month?

"Liberated — and I would be ruthless in pursuing my objectives," said Mr. Major.

Mr. Major insisted that like his steely predecessor Margaret Thatcher, he had conviction and strong self-belief.

"I'm not bothered with what people think. I'll just look at what's happened in the last five years. Is this

nation better off? Yes," he said. "I have carried Thatcherism further."

Lady Thatcher herself chimed in with support for Mr. Major — whom she has often damned with faint praise — predicting the nation would swing behind him days before the vote.

"It's the last week that counts. That's when you can really change things," said Lady Thatcher, who herself only began actively campaigning for the Conservatives in the past week.

While applauding Labour's shift from the left under Mr. Blair, Lady Thatcher said she was not convinced it was a seismic change.

"Labour have not changed enough for people to be sure of them," she told the Sunday Telegraph. "We do things by conviction politics. There is a conversion of convenience and conversions of convenience don't last."

Hong Kong Democrats seek to raise pressure on China

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong democracy activists will raise the stakes this week in a bid to bring international pressure on Beijing over its plans to curtail political and civil liberties in the territory.

Martin Lee, the leader of Hong Kong's Democratic Party, will meet U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Monday and President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore sometime in the week as part of a visit to the United States to lobby against China's plans.

Mr. Lee received a warm welcome last week in an address to the U.S. Senate's foreign relations committee, in which he pleaded for U.S. support for democracy in the territory after it reverts to Chinese rule.

"How the U.S. and other democratic countries of the world react to China's many breaches of the joint declaration will make the difference in whether Hong Kong remains the free society it is today or whether the democratic elections, human rights and the rule of law Hong Kong people have heretofore known and cherished will be extinguished," Mr. Lee told U.S. Senators Thursday.

Despite assurances of substantial autonomy under handover agreements, Beijing has begun moves to change civil liberties laws, including the bill of rights, a 1992 election law and a law on creation of political parties.

Future chief executive Tung Chee Hwa last week unveiled additional plans to restrict public protests and foreign funding for political

organisations from July 1, when Hong Kong reverts to Chinese control after more than 150 years as a British colony.

Beijing considers the most recent proposals essential for compliance with the basic law, Hong Kong's post-handover constitution. But democracy activists in Hong Kong see them as further signs of an erosion of basic rights and freedoms now enjoyed by the territory's 6.4 million people.

"It is tantamount to taking away the rights recognised by the constitution, that are recognised by international covenants," Democratic Party member Albert Ho said last week.

The proposals also have been condemned by the colonial government and last week drew admonition from the Clinton administration, which called them "disturbing."

Beijing reacted angrily to the comments, accusing Washington of meddling in Chinese affairs.

But a poll by a Hong Kong newspaper indicated that dissatisfaction with Mr. Tung was growing at home as well.

The poll of 803 people released by the Ming Pao newspaper Sunday, showed Mr. Tung's popularity has hit a new low since his office unveiled the plans to amend Hong Kong's civil liberties laws.

The newspaper said the rating of Mr. Tung's fitness for the post of chief executive had slipped 5 per cent to 4.65 points on a scale of zero to 10. Meanwhile, his "trustworthiness" rating sank 10 per cent to 4.35.

It said the survey was

done after Mr. Tung's office made proposals on two key laws — the public order ordinance, to curb protests and foreign funding for political groups in Hong Kong after the British colony reverts to China on July 1.

As the sovereignty transition nears, however, nothing is expected to derail Beijing from implementing its plans.

"To Beijing, time is running out for dilly-dallying on procedural and formal matters. It is time for action and decision because there is work to do in the next 80 days," the South China Morning Post newspaper said.

Meeting across the border in the Chinese city of Shenzhen to avoid threats of legal action by the Democrats, future Hong Kong lawmakers Saturday agreed on a formula to enact laws that would govern the territory after July 1.

Condemned by the Democrats as unconstitutional and illegal, the Chinese-announced provisional legislature is proceeding with readings of about a dozen bills that Mr. Tung believes must be passed before July 1.

But concern is mounting that the Provisional Legislature, in its haste, will fill through loopholes-filled laws that will be easy to undermine.

"Laws full of loopholes and ambiguities — and a legislative process vulnerable to challenge — would become a source of more friction and legal dispute," the South China Morning Post warned.

Indian coalition, Congress in turmoil over leadership tangle

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's ousted coalition and its estranged ally were in turmoil Sunday as they worked to mend ties soured by the collapse of the minority government.

A section of the United Front Coalition wanted caretaker Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda to step down to again secure the support of the Congress (I) Party, its former ally, and take the reins of power.

But Mr. Deve Gowda, 64, has refused, and informed colleagues he would remain the prime minister if the Congress made a U-turn and chose to prop up the front again, party officials said.

Congress President Sitaram Kesri, who was instrumental in pulling down Mr. Deve Gowda Friday, was also under pressure from members of parliament from his own party to make up with the centre-left coalition.

Mr. Deve Gowda resigned early Saturday, hours after his 10-month-old coalition government was toppled by parliament in a confidence vote.

President Sharma asked him to continue for the moment.

The Congress, which took back its parliamentary support on March 30 necessitating Friday's vote, has said it could again support the front if it dumped Mr. Deve Gowda. The front has officially refused to oblige.

"There are some indications that some partners want a change of leadership," said Doraiswamy Raja, a Communist in the front, which has about a dozen centrist, leftist and regional parties in it. "Some parties (in the front) think if we can form a government again with Congress help by changing the leader, then why not do it?" he said.

"After all, the argument goes, it will help avoid elections."

President Sharma can either call some parties in parliament to try to form a government or order fresh elections, which are most likely to benefit the Hindu nationalists, the country's main opposition.

The worst confusion was in the Congress, India's oldest party which feels it could be routed in another

election.

On Saturday, several Congress members of parliament lashed out at party President Kesri for withdrawing support to the government, embarrassing a few of his aides who made a quick exit from the meeting.

"Yes, many MPs vented their feelings and wanted to find out why Mr. Kesri did what he did," said Congress leader Santosh Mohan Deb.

Abdul Rahman Antulay and Mamata Banerjee, two other Congress members of parliament, said they would not have voted down the government Friday if the party had not issued a whip asking them to do so.

"The Congress is a terminally ill patient," a dejected Annulay said. "We have to strike at the root of the evil and rejuvenate the party."

The Congress anger results from the fear that the Hindu nationalists might grab the opportunity to cobble together a coalition and take the reins of power.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said Sunday it was keeping its options open.

Croatian Serbs protest over voting lists

VUKOVAR, Croatia (AFP) — Serb leaders in eastern Slavonia, the last Serb-held part of Croatia, have lodged a protest with the U.N. administration over Sunday's voting.

"The vote was not regular even before it began and I don't think the results can be valid," Goran Hadzic, the local Serb "president" who is reportedly on a list of people regarded as war criminals by Zagreb, told reporters.

The Serb mayor of Vukovar, Miroslav Keravica, said that about 50 per cent of the polling stations in the town, the biggest in the region, had seen problems during the morning with ballot papers not arriving.

At numerous polling stations, Serb officials stopped the vote in cases where the voters had the necessary Croatian documents but were not on the voting lists.

According to the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug, Vojislav Stanimirovic, head of the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS), sent a "vigorous protest" to Jacques Klein, the U.N. chief of the region.

The protest said there had been numerous omissions from the voting lists throughout the region "in all polling stations — from Ilok to Erdut and from Vukovar to Tenja," Tanjug reported.

In some polling stations, people with Croatian documents were not on the voting lists. In others, entire roads had been missed out, while in villages such as Pacetin and Ver it said there were no electoral lists at all, it said.

The protest, signed by Mr. Stanimirovic, said that some 3,500 people had left the polling stations after waiting for two hours to vote.

"All this brings into question the regularity of the vote and does great damage to the SDSS and its voters," he said, demanding that Klein act immediately to eliminate all omissions.

A U.N. spokesman said that while there had been difficulties, these were normal in this type of situation.

At 9 a.m. (0700 GMT), two hours after the official opening of polls, 16 out of 17 polling stations in Vukovar were working, and half an hour afterwards 100 out of 171 bureaux throughout eastern Slavonia were open, the U.N. said, adding that the vote would be extended if necessary.

The U.N. is running the local, regional and upper house elections in eastern Slavonia, a strip of land bordering Serbia which it has administered since January last year. The vote will be a key step in restoring the region to Zagreb's control.



London policemen form a line at the gates of Prime Minister John Major's Downing Street residence Saturday while engulfed in the pall of an orange smoke grenade thrown by environmental protesters. Police later charged at the marchers on horseback to disperse them (Reuter photo)

Trafalgar Square cleared after clashes with protestors

LONDON (AFP) — Police in riot gear and on horseback formed into lines Saturday to sweep protesters from central London's Trafalgar Square after a day of clashes that began outside Prime Minister John Major's office.

Police said that militant protesters had earlier tried to mow down a line of officers by driving a lorry directly at them after a march and rally to support striking Liverpool dock-workers turned into a near-riot.

The disturbances began Saturday afternoon when bottles, cans and paint were thrown at police outside the gates of Downing Street as the march passed by.

An orange smoke bomb was thrown into the street and distress flares let off as hundreds of protesters harangued police standing behind barriers.

Mounted police in riot gear were called in to repeatedly charge at the demonstrators in a bid to disperse trouble-makers.

One protester was arrested after he broke into the nearby foreign office during the disturbance and threw documents out of a window into the street.

The demonstration moved on to Trafalgar Square, where there were more clashes. A police helicopter circled overhead as minor scuffles broke out between police and demonstrators.

Some protesters broke up paving slabs and threw them at police while others climbed buildings in the square and unfurled banners.

Graffiti was scrawled on Nelson's Column, the nearby lion statues and the National Gallery.

Close ranks of helmeted,

shield-carrying police and mounted officers later moved in to clear the square. They met with little resistance and by 1915 GMT the glass and rubble-strewn square was virtually empty.

Police blamed the violence on a minority element and said that at the height of the disturbances, 1,800 police officers were on standby with up to 1,000 deployed in the square itself.

A police spokesman said 16 people were arrested during the day, including six who were allegedly involved in the attempt to mow down officers with a lorry carrying the sound system which provided music for the rally.

The social justice march was aimed at highlighting perceived attacks on living standards and supporting dockers from the northwest-

ern port of Liverpool, who were sacked more than 18 months ago but are still fighting for their jobs.

Environmentalists, homeless people, asylum seekers, pensioners and people with disabilities joined the demonstration.

A police spokesman stressed that the violence did not appear to have involved the striking Liverpool dock-workers, many of whom brought their families with them for the march, during which a petition was handed in to Downing Street.

He said he believed the majority of the dockers and their supporters had left promptly after the rally ended at 1600 GMT, leaving about 1,700 members of the radical environmental group reclaim the streets and their sympathisers.

Italy's Prodi pledges 'new dawn' for Albania

TIRANA (R) — Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi said Sunday that a multi-national security force could aid the "rebirth" of Albania after weeks of violent unrest.

Mr. Prodi, warmly welcomed by thousands of cheering Albanians, said the mission, codenamed "Alba" (dawn) by the Italians, could help Europe's poorest nation restore law and order.

"The mission is called 'Alba'," Prodi said. "And this could be the dawn in the history of Albania, the rebirth of Albania."

Nearly 300 people have been killed and about 700 hurt in an armed uprising over the last six weeks since the collapse of get-rich-quick investment schemes in which many Albanians lost their life savings.

Mr. Prodi, at the cost of a rift with his hard left allies, won parliament's approval last week for Italy to spearhead the 6,000-strong multinational force.

Its mission is to safeguard emergency food and medicine supplies. Advance units arrived Friday and the bulk of the force is due Tuesday.

Escorted by heavily-armed Italian Marines, Mr. Prodi arrived in a convoy of three Italian army helicopters in the rebel-held southern port city of Vlore, where he was welcomed by more than 10,000 Albanians.

Mr. Prodi met Albania's Prime Minister Bashkim Fino in Vlore, where they discussed the precise role of the Italian-led force.

"We want it to be rapid, efficient and peaceful," Mr. Prodi told a news conference. "We do not intend to intervene in domestic Albanian politics."

Mr. Prodi also expressed his condolences to the victims of a refugee boat that was sunk off Italy on March 28 after colliding with an Italian naval vessel.

Mr. Prodi called for a moment of silence for the victims of Albania's worst maritime disaster. About 60 journalists and local officials at the news conference stood quietly.

Tirana says at least 80 Albanians, mostly from Vlore, were killed and many of the 34 survivors accused the Italians of ramming the boat, charges Italy denied.

Karachi bomb blast kills 1, triggers new tensions

KARACHI (AFP) — Fresh tension gripped the Pakistani port city of Karachi Sunday after a deadly bomb blast outside the home of a political activist gunned down hours earlier, residents said.

The bomb killed a cousin of slain activist Mahmoud Ahmad Khan, who belonged to the MQM-Haqiqi Faction, a splinter group of the powerful Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), police said.

Three people were wounded, witnesses and hospital sources said.

The explosive device, planted in a motorcycle parked near the gates of Khan's residence, was detonated as relatives and party colleagues arrived to mourn his death.

Bomb disposal experts said the bomb carrying two kilograms of explosive was detonated with a

timer.

Khan, a member of the Central Executive Committee of MQM-Haqiqi, was shot dead Saturday by unidentified assailants who barged into his home in the city's eastern Landhi district. The gunmen escaped.

Residents in the area said the atmosphere was tense Sunday morning following the explosion, with sporadic shooting in the air.

Hundreds of party leaders and emotionally charged activists had gathered in Landhi to attend the funeral prayers for Khan and his cousin, also a member of MQM-Haqiqi.

Officials said paramilitary rangers and armed police had intensified their patrols in armoured vehicles to prevent any further incident.

Haqiqi leaders said the bomb was meant to kill their party chairman, Afaq Ahmed, who had been to

Khan's residence to offer his condolences to the family but left minutes before the blast.

The group blamed the mainstream MQM which denied any involvement in either attack.

"MQM does not believe in violence," Ishtiaq Azhar, an MQM leader and senator, said. "We have nothing to do with it."

Rivalry between the two groups has frequently led to clashes since the breakaway Haqiqi emerged in 1992.

MQM represents Karachi's large settler community of Muslim immigrants from India who arrived after the partition of the sub-continent in 1947.

The main MQM is a coalition partner in Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim league-led government in southern Sindh province, of which Karachi is capital.

MQM-Haqiqi chairman Afaq Ahmad condemned the killings and demanded the arrest of those responsible within 48 hours.

"We cannot sit idle. The government should stop patronising the killers," Ahmad said, adding that if the government failed to protect the lives of citizens then there should be a new election in the province.

More than 2,000 people have been killed in political, ethnic and religious violence in troubled Karachi over the past three years.

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government blamed the MQM for much of the violence in the city, while the party denied the charges and said the unrest stemmed from Bhutto's anti-Mohajir policy.

Mobutu firm in face of expiring rebel deadline

KINSHASA (R) — Zaire rebels looked set to resume their whirlwind offensive Sunday after President Mobutu Sese Seko defiantly dismissed their deadline for him to quit and said he had no plans to go into exile.

But Mr. Mobutu, whose emergency rule prime minister has banned all street protests in the capital Kinshasa, has left the door open for face-to-face talks with rebel leader Laurent Kabila — provided he asks politely.

Rebel radio reminded Mr. Mobutu, Zaire's ruler since 1965 and now ailing with cancer, Saturday that time was running out.

"Mr. Mobutu has just 24 hours thanks to the extreme generosity of the alliance. He has only two choices — to resign or to go into exile," it said.

But Mr. Mobutu, 66, looking in better health than on recent appearances, said: "This kind of joke will backfire... I am head of state I don't accept ultimatums from gang leaders. My country is Zaire and I don't know of anyone who has proposed my exile."

The rebels have met little resistance from Mr. Mobutu's rapidly retreating army. In the second city of Lubumbashi, which the rebels captured Wednesday and Thursday, hundreds of former government soldiers have joined rebel ranks.

Kabila declared from Thursday a three-day "pause" in the advance of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire (AFDL) after sweeping into Lubumbashi, capital of the mineral-rich Shaba region.

The rebels, who took up arms in October, control half of the huge and potentially rich Central African nation, including its economic heart and its diamond, copper, cobalt and gold mines.

Mr. Mobutu, appearing with his new Prime Minister General Likulia Bolongo, did not rule out direct talks with Kabila.

"If he asks me politely I cannot refuse to talk to a compatriot but (for him) to be in Goma (rebel headquarters in east Zaire) and say I give him three days, it's not my style or nature. I cannot reply," Mr. Mobutu told reporters.

Mr. Mobutu, who had prostate cancer surgery in Europe in August, said his opponents had taken advantage of his illness. "All that has happened was because I was ill. I was on my sick bed when the affair started so I was stabbed in the back," he said.

But he dismissed suggestions that the rebels were 300 kilometres from Kinshasa.

Mr. Mobutu declared a national state of emergency Tuesday and named Likulia prime minister, shunting aside his opposition foe Etienne Tshisekedi, who had held the job for less than a week.

With Mr. Tshisekedi supporters accusing Mr. Mobutu of treason and openly calling for his ouster, Likulia said all street protests in Kinshasa were banned.

"The people cannot take to the streets. We are under a state of emergency. Police measures have been taken to curb activities of the political parties," he told reporters Saturday.

Thousands of Tshisekedi supporters trying to install their man at the prime minister's office clashed with troops Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Sunday it had declared a cholera epidemic among Rwandan Hutu refugees in rebel-held eastern Zaire.

The announcement was certain to delay plans to repatriate at least 100,000 refugees camping out between rebel-held Kisangani and Ubundu. WHO official Leonard Kinuani told Reuters.

"Up to April 9 in the Kasese 2 site we had recorded 120 cases requiring hospital treatment of whom five died," Mr. Kinuani said by telephone from Kisangani.

About 50,000 of the Rwandan Hutu refugees are at Kasese 2 with an equivalent number in other makeshift sites.

"This formal declaration of an epidemic will delay the repatriation until it is brought under control," he said.



A guard keeps close watch on a captured Zairean army colonel at the Lido Barracks in Lubumbashi Sunday. Zaire rebels looked set to resume their whirlwind offensive after President Mobutu Sese Seko defiantly dismissed their deadline for him to quit and said he had no plans to go into exile (Reuter photo)

"We have to fear that there is the same cholera problem in the other sites," Mr. Kinuani said, adding that tests continued.

The local Zairean population was also at risk.

The refugees are the rump of more than two million Rwandan Hutus who fled their country in July 1994. Most returned home late last year but about 300,000 are believed to be stranded in Zaire with the largest concentration between Kisangani and Ubundu, 125 kilometres to the south.

The U.N. refugee agency is planning a hugely expensive airlift to repatriate the Hutus who now say they want to go home. The first flights were expected in the next few days.

But Mr. Kinuani said it might take a month to declare the refugees cholera-free.

Pope appeals for reconciliation on visit to Sarajevo

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Pope John Paul II appealed in an historic mass in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo Sunday for reconciliation and love to triumph after the country's bloody war, making a long-awaited two-day visit marred by an apparent attempt on his life.

The Bosnian capital, which witnessed the start of World War I and saw the century end with a brutal siege, has become a "symbol of the 20th century," the Pontiff told cheering crowds of Catholic faithful gathered in the city's Kosovo Football Stadium.

"Sarajevo: A city that has become a symbol, in a certain sense the symbol, of the twentieth century," the 76-year-old pontiff said.

"In 1914 the name Sarajevo came to be associated with the outbreak of the World War I. At the end of this same century, there is linked with the name of this city the painful experience of the war that, in the course of five long years, has left behind in this region a terrible wake of death and destruction."

Bosnian police Saturday foiled an apparent attempt on the life of the Pope, discovering and removing 23 landmines and a remote control detonator, wired up under a road bridge into the city which he crossed after his arrival.

The devices had been planted there overnight Friday, U.N. officials said.

"We believe it was an attempt to blow up his holiness," a U.N. official said Sunday, refusing to be named.

With investigations into the apparent assassination bid are continuing, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic told the Pope he regretted the apparent attempt on the Pope, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro said.

The Pope is very happy with the way his visit is taking place," Mr. Navarro added.

With snow swirling around the stadium, the 76-year-old head of the Roman Catholic Church began the mass with a prayer, looking out on the congregation from his seat on a huge yellow podium in the stadium which was a regular target of shelling during the bitter three and a half year Bosnian war.

Inside the stadium, a choir of Catholic Croat girls sporting denim jackets and yellow-and-white papal scarves sang hymns as the Pope prepared to speak.

Many of the pilgrims waved yellow and white Vatican flags or the red and white checkerboard flag of the former Bosnian Croat state, Herceg Bosna, now officially dissolved.

Olive green helicopters from the NATO-led stabilization force (SFOR), thundered through the skies above the stadium and Italian, French and Norwegian NATO troops were positioned around the area in armoured vehicles.

Before the mass, the Pope had talks with the three members of the collegial presidency, President Alija Izetbegovic, a Muslim, the Croat representative Kresimir Zubak, and the Serb representative Momcilo Krajcinik. The latter refused to go to the airport to welcome the Pope, Saturday pretexts "security reasons."

The Pope reminded his congregation Sunday that he had attempted to come to Sarajevo in September 1994, when it was under siege, but had been prevented by the rebel Bosnian Serbs who threatened that they could not "guarantee his security."

"The entire world has continued to speak of Sarajevo in historical, political and military terms. Nor did the Pope fail to raise his voice concerning this tragic war, and many times and in different circumstances he has had on his lips and always in his heart the name of your city. For several years he ardently desired to be able to come among you in person," he said Sunday.

"Today, finally, that desire has been fulfilled. The Lord be thanked."

Sarajevo's Islamic leaders have joined with Catholics in praising the Pope's decision to visit Bosnia, saying the trip would help to encourage a climate of tolerance in the country, the scene of a 43-month war which ended in November 1995.

The Pope called on his arrival for reconciliation between the main Muslim, Serb and Croat communities.

He urged the re-building of a multi-cultural tolerance in the country ravaged by ethnically-directed war.

Tension in Bosnia has been high in the weeks leading up to the Pope's visit, with periodic clashes as Muslim refugees have tried to return to their former homes in areas now held by Croats and Serbs.

A wave of bombings has also struck Catholic churches and monasteries across the country in the past few months, church authorities said.

Relations between the Croats and Muslims have seriously deteriorated in recent weeks and for this reason, Croats travelling to Sarajevo opted to travel by night through Muslim-held territory.

S. Korean opposition accuses president of sacrificing politicians

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's opposition party accused President Kim Young-Sam Sunday of sacrificing politicians and even his trusted associates in an attempt to save his troubled son.

"The president put senior politicians, including his aides, on the chopping board to save his son. Kim Hyun-Chul," the splinter opposition United Liberal Democratic Party said in a statement.

"The son is the source of trouble. The president should give up his selfish attitude and approve the son's arrest," the statement said.

The statement followed a grilling of seven top politicians including Kim Deok-Ryong, a ruling party presidential hopeful who prosecutors said took \$56,000 from the failed Hanbo conglomerate.

"We confirmed that Kim Deok-Ryong's aide took Hanbo's money, although the donation was not reported to him," senior prosecutor Kim Sang-Hee told reporters.

Kim Deok-Ryong, a faction leader of the ruling New Korea Party (NKP), was released early Sunday after a gruelling investigation into accusations he topped the list of payoffs by Hanbo's founder Chung Tae-Soo.

The prosecutor said several of the seven politicians investigated admitted receiving cash donations from Hanbo. But he did not say whether charges would be pressed against them.

Prosecutors launched a probe last week into 33 politicians, including 20 incumbent lawmakers, whose names have surfaced in investigations into a massive loans-for-kickbacks scandal engulfing Hanbo.

The scandal has sparked accusations of high-level corruption since Hanbo collapsed in January under \$5.8 billion of bad debts.

Prosecutors arrested 11 prominent figures, including three ruling party lawmakers and one former cabinet minister, but failed to calm widespread accusations that Kim Young-Sam's son was at the center of the scandal.

On Sunday, the presidential office suggested an amnesty for two jailed ex-presidents Chun Doo-Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo, who are appealing against convictions for corruption and staging a coup in 1979.

Masood, coalition allies discuss joint offensive against Taleban

TALUQAN. Afghanistan (AFP) — Anti-Taleban coalition leaders have begun discussing strategy for a co-ordinated offensive against the religious militia, officials told AFP Sunday.

The meeting was between the big three — Ahmad Shah Masood, General Abdul Rashid Dostum and Karim Khalili, said an official in Baghlan provincial centre of Taluqan, 250 kilometres north of Kabul.

Mr. Masood, the commander of the former government forces ousted with President Burhanuddin Rabbani by the Taleban last September, has joined forces with Gen. Dostum's ethnic Uzbek army and Mr. Khalili's Shi'ite religious faction.

Said Jaffer Naderi, a Dostum general who commands the Isma'elia minority religious militia, hosted the six-hour Saturday night strategy meeting at his northern base in Pule Khomri, officials said.

In addition to the alliance's three main leaders and Gen. Naderi, the meeting was also attended by Mohaqiqi, an important commander of the pro-Iranian Shi'ite party the Hezb-i-Wahdat, they said.

"Results of the meeting were encouraging," an official told AFP adding that some differences were ironed out. He did not elaborate.

Mr. Masood was flown back to Taluqan Sunday in a Russian made helicopter. On Saturday Mr. Masood and Mr. Rabbani had driven to Pule Khomri in a convoy of 20 vehicles and an official stressed "there were no security problems" en route.

Mr. Masood had told journalists in Taluqan last week that the northern alliance has been joined by the Mujahedeen of the former provincial council in Jalalabad led by Haji Abdul Qadeer, a former governor of eastern Ningharhar province.

The northern alliance in coordination with Mr. Qadeer has planned a nationwide offensive against the Taleban in the coming year, he said.

Masood did not give specific details of the coordinated offensive but he indicated his determination to push the Taleban out of Kabul, and repeated his allegations that the Taleban movement was "a creation of Pakistan," a charge denied earlier by Islamabad.

Mr. Qadeer's Mujahedeen have engaged the Taleban in recent fighting in Ningharhar as a prelude to the coordinated attack of the northern alliance.

A Masood spokesman claimed that the forces of Qadeer had captured the eastern Kunar province's district centre of Asmar Friday. They claimed to have killed 34 Taleban, taken 14 prisoners and captured four vehicles.

In Ningharhar province fighting was reported in the district of Khogiani but no major gains were reported.

In Kapisa province, adjacent to Mr. Masood's native Panjsher Valley northeast of Kabul, a number of villages were claimed to have been captured by Masood forces.

Ethiopia blast kills one, wounds 42

ADDIS ABABA (R) — At least one person was killed and 42 injured when grenades were lobbed into the Tigray Hotel, in the Piazza area of the city centre, and Blue Tops, an Italian restaurant which is a favourite haunt of wealthy Ethiopians and foreigners.

Unconfirmed reports said there were two other blasts Saturday night in the capital.

Police sealed off the restaurant and hotel Sunday and journalists were denied entry to the Black Lion Hospital where two of the wounded Britons were being treated.

Ms. Napthen said one or more unidentified assailants threw the grenade into the blue tops at about 7.30 p.m. (1630 GMT) Saturday before the restaurant was at its busiest.

She declined to release the names of the British casualties but said they were residents not tourists.

The French embassy was not immediately available for comment.

State radio, quoting police officials, said one person was killed and 34 wounded at the Tigray Hotel.

The report did not say if any suspects had been arrested.

Several bombs have exploded in Addis Ababa and provincial cities in the past year and last November an Ethiopian Airlines plane was hijacked and crashed into the sea off the Comoro Islands, killing some 125 people on board.

S. Korea urges North to introduce market economy

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's Foreign Affairs Minister Yoo Chong-Ha Sunday called on the starving Communist state of North Korea to introduce elements of a market economy to avoid collapse.

"If North Korea is to survive in today's world it is imperative that it embark on economic reform," he told the annual interparliamentary conference here.

"They should introduce elements of market economy, particularly in the areas where it wishes to interact with external economies," he said, adding Seoul was ready to help in such reform and opening.

"If North Korea fails to extricate itself in time from the current course of its anachronistic strategy, it can hardly avoid a structural failure."

"North Korea is like a ship sailing toward a mountain island off the ocean, mainly because of its navigational misjudgement."

Temporizing here and there without fundamentally revising the course will not help."

He noted North Korea, which has more than one million troops, was preparing to sit down at a deputy-minister level meeting with South Korea and the United States in New York Wednesday to consider peace negotiations.

Fully fledged four-way talks between rivals North and South Korea, with China and the United States acting as intermediaries, are aimed at finding a peace agreement to replace the 1953 armistice agreement ending the Korean War.

South Korea "has announced that it is willing to discuss, within the framework of the four-party talks, the issue of economic assistance to the North as part of confidence building and tension reduction measures," Mr. Yoo said.

"Our aid would include not only the supply of food to feed the North Korean population but also other programmes that would enhance its agricultural productivity."

North Korean health officials reported for the first time last week that 134 children had died of malnutrition and recent Western visitors to the North said they saw signs of mass starvation. North Korea has a population of 22 million.

The minister said North Korea was standing "at the crossroads."

"If peace is disturbed on the peninsula it will adversely affect the overall security of northeast Asia and thereby of the world," he added.

"Hence, it is vitally important that the international community as a whole make a concerted effort to help North Korea choose the right decision."

The statement coincided with a report in the Joong-Ang newspaper in Seoul quoting a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official as saying U.S. and South Korean officials won a "positive" answer from North Korea in recent working-level talks in New York.

"We (Seoul and Washington) won a positive answer from North Korea over our proposal to hold the four-way talks in May," the Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying. The newspaper said Seoul and Washington would discuss more food aid and other gifts to the North.

The South Korean foreign minister said North Korea had no official head of state since Kim Jong-Il unofficially took over after his father Kim Il-Sung's death in July 1994, its people were starving and its economy had shrunk for seven years in a row.

"North Korea is also experiencing a serious slackening of discipline. Its ideological foundations are faltering," he said.

"Recently, the chief author of its National Ideology of Juche, or self reliance, has defected."

Pyeongyang's highest-ranking defector, Hwang Jang-Yop, walked into the

South Korean consulate in Beijing on Feb. 12 and is expected to fly to Seoul later this month from a transit stop in a secret Philippine location.

Five U.S. Senators warned in Washington Friday that failure to provide humanitarian assistance to North Korea could result in military action by the Communist nation.

North Korea has bitterly attacked U.S. and South Korean reluctance to provide food aid until the North enters a peace dialogue, blaming their economic blockade for the impending famine.

U.S. and South Korean statements of the need for readiness should the Pyongyang regime collapse provoked warnings from the North at the weekend.

A North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman warned on Pyongyang's official news agency Saturday that concern over the regime was "making our army and people keep utmost vigilance."

"All the steps we may take over its possible consequences will be only too natural," he said.

Raising the condition of peace talks before said "a dishonest and inhumanitarian behaviour," the spokesman said.

U.S. Air Force steps up search for mysterious missing jet fighter

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Searchers for a fighter jet missing since April 2 in southwest Colorado hope a break in the weather Sunday will give them their best chance to find the plane and its pilot.

"Tomorrow we expect the best weather yet," Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Robin Chandler said Saturday. She said satellite data imagery had helped searchers concentrate on five specific areas.

Col. Chandler said the air force has assembled just over 30 aircraft, including planes from the Colorado National Guard, the Civil Air Patrol and private owners, to look for the vanished A-10 Thunderbolt attack bomber.

A break in the bad weather could be key to unravelling one of the military's most baffling missing-aircraft mysteries since an entire navy squadron disappeared into the Bermuda Triangle off Florida in the 1940s, according to Lieutenant Keith Shepherd.

"The ability of the aircraft to search has vastly improved," Lt. Shepherd said in a telephone interview from Colorado.

Despite some 20 eyewitness reports of black smoke in the area where the search is concentrated and hundreds of sorties by search planes, no trace of the jet has been found yet.

Seven to 10 helicopters, 12 civil air patrol airplanes and one air force EC-130 airplane were combing the area mountainous area of southwest Colorado near the Vail Ski Resort, more than 1,000 kilometres from where the A-10 jet flew off course carrying four MK-82 bombs.

A high altitude U-2 spy plane was photographing an even broader swath of land where the jet could have crashed.

Jordan Times

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Transparency in treatment

IN HIS first formal press conference after taking office, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali touched upon practically all major issues confronting the country be they domestic, regional or international. On the peace process, the prime minister was clear on who is to blame for the current stalemate. Israel, he said, must fulfil its obligations under the Oslo agreements, and failing that international pressure must be brought to bear on it to stop its settlement programme. This view reflects faithfully what His Majesty King Hussein told President Bill Clinton during their talks at the White House two weeks ago, and it tallies with what the King has been telling Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, directly and indirectly, all along.

With regard to Iraq, Dr. Majali upheld the traditional Jordanian position which rejects any form of interference in that country's internal affairs. At the same time he called for an end to the trials and tribulations of the Iraqi people by lifting the crippling sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council. In return Iraq must implement the council's resolutions in full. Jordan is in effect not departing from the position that it has adopted on Iraq ever since the imposition of the embargo in 1990. In this context, it will be remembered that Dr. Majali was critical of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright when she called on the Iraqi people to topple their regime before Washington could consider restoring ties. This position is shared by most countries and it has proved to be the only game in town against the backdrop of what has been happening in the region.

Internally the focus of Dr. Majali's press conference was on the next parliamentary elections. The prime minister again assured the country that those elections will be held on time and conducted freely and fairly, though he did not specify whether they will be held on the basis of a new legislation, and if so how different from the current temporary law it will be. This is where in fact the government has to realise that fair and democratic elections cannot be held on the basis of an incomplete legislation governing it. Every effort should be made to rectify the existing shortcomings in the law so that the next elections will be even more representative and fair than those of 1993.

With regard to the economy, it is to the prime minister's credit that he admitted the serious stagnation facing it, which he attributed in part at least to the stifling bureaucracy and the lack of sufficient incentives. While all of us seem to agree on the diagnosis of our economic ills, we are yet to build a consensus on the course of action that needs to be taken right away.

The prime minister was indeed open and candid in his opinions and analysis on the problems facing his government and the country as a whole. What we should hope for is an equally clear and transparent programme that can face the challenges head-on.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i said Sunday that the U.S. has failed as an honest broker in the Middle East and should make way for the Europeans to carry out this delicate task. Fahed Fawc said that the outcome of Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington and his meeting with President Clinton have showed America's total failure to assume the role of neutral broker or an honest partner in this issue. Netanyahu has reaffirmed Israel's stand and its determination to perpetuate its occupation of Palestinian lands and its right to build settlements in Jerusalem and other parts of the West Bank, noted the writer. He said the U.S., which vetoed U.N. Security Council resolutions that demanded from Israel to comply with the peace accords and failed to pressure Israel into halting the building of settlements, is not worthy of the role it has been assuming and imposing on the Arabs who do not trust what it does and who see in it a staunch supporter of Israel's illegal practices, said the writer. He said Israel, which is disregarding peace accords, does not even trust the U.S. and is acting free of any American pressure. The writer demanded that Washington admit its failure and open the way for the Europeans to assume the role of peace broker because of their proximity to the Middle East and their strong historical and geographical links with this region.

FAKHRI SALEH, a writer for Al Dustour, discussed the outcome of a television programme by the London-based MBC television and said that the meagre funds collected by the volunteers reflect the fact that wealthy Arabs are unaware of or do not wish to be involved in any campaign for protecting the Arab identity of Jerusalem. The writer quoted Faisal Hussein, the Palestinian leader in charge of the Jerusalem portfolio, who said in the programme that the Arab citizens of Jerusalem can build thousands of houses and protect the Arab institutions, but they lack the funds to do that at a time when they continually face Israeli arbitrary measures against them. He pointed out that the Zionists around the world continue to pump huge funds to ensure Israel's success in evicting the Arabs and Judaizing the city of Jerusalem while the wealthy Arabs are not responding to calls to save Jerusalem and the Arab houses and institutions. The writer said that the Arabs must realise that to save Jerusalem all hands are needed and all efforts at the political and diplomatic levels should be pooled.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

No need to 'regulate' education, it takes care of itself

THERE ARE several sectors of the Jordanian economy that have been successful in spite of the majority of the decision makers' attempts to derail them. Their success is due, primarily, to their independence from domestic institutional influences whose motto appears to be: If it is not broke regulate it. Private education is one of those sectors that has been doing well, yet it needs to act quickly to escape the knife of regulatory mayhem.

Jordan has several almost new and somewhat modern private universities that have come to attract significant numbers of students. Obviously these institutions are doing well because the Ministry of Higher Education has recently asked one of them not to accept any new students: the classes are full. Furthermore, the same ministry reached the conclusion that Jordan has enough private universities and decided not to grant any new licences because the market, supposedly, can not take any more private universities (there are no studies backing these claims). Is something wrong with the picture? Well, it is not difficult to guess.

Obviously there is a market shortage of private universities, since their classes are full, according to the Ministry of Higher Education. (New investment expenditures in education will benefit the economy and the increase in competition among schools will improve the quality of education and lower its costs). So why not issue more licences and let more market entrants compete with the incumbents? Because, the popular reasoning is, such an act would increase the number of students that attend these universities, thereby lowering the standard of education in Jordan.

There are two underlying assumptions being made here: the first is that private universities attract a lower quality of students, those who did not do well in the high school exam (that one shot measure of the brilliance and failure of a person); the second is that the universities, by being private, are less disciplined, tending to provide a lower-quality education.

Both assumptions are, of course, far from the truth. The high school exam, a.k.a. tawjihi, is an outmoded tool designed to measure the ability of a student to memorise a syllabus, an endeavour which does not encourage independent thinking or creativity and has no relevance to the environment of the student. Furthermore, the very nature of the exam as a one shot deal makes it too dangerous to be the deciding factor in the future of a young life. The simple act of catching a cold or having a minor accident hours before the exam could cause one to lose a few points on a test that decides whether the person becomes a lawyer, a doctor or an engineer, completely different

jobs with differing skill requirements.

So why not give the student who wants to become an engineer another chance, at another university, and let this student suffer the additional costs of a private education as punishment for not having qualified for public education, rather than force the person into a profession that does not fit him/her?

Besides, would not the creation of new universities attract inward investment to Jordan? Would not the schooling of the high school graduates inside the boundaries of Jordan, instead of them going overseas, reduce the balance of payments deficits, the current account deficit and the demand for foreign exchange, thereby liberating the economy and the dinar from some of those surmounting pressures?

The private universities tend to hire tenured staff from public universities who are on sabbatical leaves. Consequently, their staff comprises the best that the public schools offer, especially since they pay higher wages than government schools. Also, private schools are less bound by the restrictions and protectionism that hover over public universities which have to hire those who send on scholarship (sometimes obtained through waste) who they are unable to fire later if they do not perform.

Not only do the public universities flaunt a sense of superiority in their attitude towards the private universities, they also tend to be dictatorial and irrational in their decisions towards their own students' academic pursuits.

In a recent article in the Arabic press, the students of a public university protested their university's decision to ban all students from taking summer courses elsewhere.

What is wrong with allowing students to attend other universities in the country? Nothing, since they are all accredited by the same accreditation board. So why not allow the students to take classes elsewhere instead of wasting their summers in the streets of Jordan or in the coffee shops smoking their hubble-bubble in preparation for a lifetime of underachievement? And why not let the people (students and investors) spend the money if they want to spend it? Isn't the economy suffering from a depression (a prolonged recession) and severe unemployment? Why regulate when the market system and competition will trim the fat and push the best forward while the worst will not be able to attract students in the long-run because their graduates will not be employable?

There is only one logical answer to all these questions: in Jordan, officials love to regulate. In fact, to many, further regulation is always the best solution, and that is dangerous thinking, or better still, thinking dangerously.

Israel: A choice between duress and respect

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON — Underlying all the years of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, there has been a fundamental choice for the two peoples. One side could try to dominate or destroy the other, or they could live side by side with a degree of mutual respect.

For the Palestinians, the first course meant rejection of the very idea of the Jewish state, opposing its superior force by terrorism. The second was the path of compromise, agreeing to live in peace in a mini-state alongside Israel.

For Israel, the first choice meant permanent control of all occupied territory and suppression of its Palestinian inhabitants. The second meant acceptance of Palestinian aspirations for a homeland, negotiating about its nature and territory.

At Oslo, both sides chose the second course, the path of peace. Now that choice is in doubt. The events of recent weeks — unilateral, humiliating actions by the Israeli government, Palestinian protest and terrorism in response — have the menacing ring of atavism.

Benjamin Netanyahu blames it all on Yasser Arafat, who he says gave a "green light" to terrorists. Diplomats on the scene disagree. I do not know exactly what Mr. Arafat did, but I do know this: if Yasser

Arafat had been on Elba, Palestinians would have felt the same anger at Mr. Netanyahu's policy.

When Mr. Netanyahu announced that Israel's promised next withdrawal would be from only 2 per cent of the West Bank, and decided suddenly to start building homes for 30,000 Jews in East Jerusalem, the Palestinian reaction was predictable. Indeed, Israeli security officials predicted it — violence if the Jerusalem project went ahead. President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt said the same thing.

"Violence hurts the Palestinian cause, but it cannot be stopped at the diktat of Mr. Arafat. In the long run only peace — a peace of hope — can do that."

The Palestinians' reaction was predictable for a simple reason. They saw Mr. Netanyahu's actions, taken without consulting or even informing Mr. Arafat, as a rejection of Oslo. They thought he had chosen the first course: Domination instead of mutual respect. They saw his aim as permanent Israeli occupation of most of the West Bank, with just some islands of Palestinian control.

"For 13 months there was no violence because there

was hope," said Saeb Erakat, a senior Palestinian negotiator much respected by his Israeli counterparts. "Netanyahu succeeded in taking that hope away."

Some Israelis, and some American supporters of Israel, seem to find it hard to understand why Palestinians should be discontented. For example, they say, Jerusalem under Israeli governance is a united city in which Palestinians are fairly treated.

But anyone who has visited Jerusalem with eyes open knows that in reality it

of Palestinians live three to a room, while just 2.5 per cent of Jews do. A 1995 municipal report said that the East Jerusalem sewage system was half the required size, and that schools and streets and lights were inadequate.

Like anyone else, Palestinians feel resentment when forced to live as a second-class group, unable to control their own lives. If Mr. Arafat acquiesced in a permanent status of that kind, he would not remain their leader.

Violence hurts the Palestinian cause, but it cannot be stopped at the diktat of Mr. Arafat. In the long run only peace — a peace of hope — can do that.

Israel's rapprochement with the rest of the Arab World also depends on peace with the Palestinians. Mr. Netanyahu should not have been surprised when an Arab conference last week called for suspension of the ties being formed with Israel.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will end only when both parties can live in respect and security. That means Israel accepting a disarmed Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with a political place in a still single Jerusalem. I am an optimist, and I think that will happen. The question is how many lives will be lost before Mr. Netanyahu or a successor chooses peace.

The New York Times

Human Rights File

Israel might disintegrate from within

By Waleed M. Sadi

ISRAEL IS digging its own grave by promoting and protecting its ultrareligious factions and the Likud Party is the prime reason for this suicidal course. The religious parties' strength has been steadily growing, no thanks to the Likud Party which has put its immediate interests ahead of the Israeli long-term interests.

Lusting power at any price, the Likud, and the like of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has been busy cultivating a close relationship with the extremists within the Israeli society for no avowed purpose except to capture power and cling to it at all costs, even if that could lead their nation to an early demise.

The Likud has been in effect behind every legislative move to support ultrareligious forces financially and otherwise. As things stand now, the ultrareligious parties enjoy privileges in every conceivable way, ranging from tax exemptions to direct and indirect handouts and even exemption from military service, an absurd situation, considering that the very people who support the extremists policies of Israel are effectively exempt from military service to back these policies up.

The strength of the religious groups stands at about 25 per cent of the total Israeli constituencies and is projected to double in size in less than a decade, as long as the Likud remains short-sighted. Besides being unproductive economically and literally parasitic, the Israeli government will continue to bear the exorbitant costs of the upkeep and welfare of these religious groups for no reason other than expediency, pure and simple. The Israeli fundamentalists are in effect driving their country to economic ruin and political disasters simply because their number has swollen and the Likud Party is willing to hold hands with them in order to tilt their newly discovered political strength in its favour.

The other "half" of the Israeli society is therefore forced to fund the existence of the ultrareligious and pay for the ruinous policies that they promote in the Knesset and elsewhere in the Israeli establishment even though they are in total disagreement with them.

What exacerbates the problem is the dramatic rise in the number of the religious population, due to their high birth rate and the new waves of emigrants who tend to be religious oriented. Unlike the early Jewish emigrants from east and central Europe, who were by and large agnostic and secular, the majority of the new Jewish

settlers appears to be totally absorbed and dominated by religion in its most extreme form. Most of the hardliners in Israel come from the new Israelis.

It has been said that the Holocaust in Nazi Germany made many Jews question their religious beliefs. In reaction to the Nazi atrocities in the forties, many Jews shunned religion and turned to secularism. The continued Israeli successes since 1948 seem to have reversed that trend and contributed to a religious revival instead as these triumphs strengthened the belief in religion and lent support to the conviction among Jews that God is on their side. Religion was hence viewed as the ultimate answer to the Jewish trials and tribulations. The end result was a dramatic upsurge in religious fervour in Israel and among Jews in the diaspora.

Fortunately, though, ultrareligious Jews refuse to serve in the armed forces. They even refuse alternative public service. They seem to enjoy "living off the fat of the lamb" as it were, at the expense of secular Israelis who pay with their blood and sweat for the headline policies advocated by Israeli fundamentalists. Of course the Likud Party was the first Israeli political force to recognise the rising political fortunes of the religious community and started to court them ever since. Now it is a foregone conclusion that Israeli religious fanatics have brought the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to power, albeit by a small margin. There is little doubt that, as things stand now, the Likud would continue to enjoy the support of the religious factions for as long as one can predict.

With the ranks of the secularists poised to decrease with the increasing prospects of their migration to the West to escape the intolerant conditions created by Jewish fundamentalism, the future looks bleak for Israel. The first spontaneous reaction of Leah Rabin, the widow of the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin who was assassinated by Israeli extremists, was to announce her intention to pack up and leave the country. Leah Rabin's initial reaction may have been driven by grief and a sense of shock, but I have heard the same remark from many Israelis who would rather leave than put up with the emerging political landscape in their country.

If this indeed is the future scenario that the Likud is preparing for their countrymen, then there is no escape from the conclusion that Israel may not survive very long, not so much because of Arab pressure but rather from the internal forces that are poised to disintegrate the country from within.

Time to get tough on international corruption

By Maria Livanos Cattani

PARIS — Public resentment of international corruption has never been stronger. Governments and business should work together to halt its progress and at least make bribery a marginal and hazardous practice, even if they cannot stamp it out altogether.

Corruption is wasteful and both obstructs and distorts trade. In country after country it has destabilised governments and discredited political establishments. It deprives the deserving of their rightful reward and nourishes political extremism.

There is real momentum behind the drive against bribery in international trade and it must be maintained. Business is determined to play its part.

We need laws that allow enterprises to be reasonably confident that incorruptibility will not hamstring them when they compete in the international marketplace. The consequences of being a lone knight in shining armour can be failure to win foreign contracts, the shutting down of production lines and massive job losses.

For business, therefore, the international coherence of legislation as well as vigorous enforcement are keys to success in

suppressing corruption. Regrettably, despite recent international initiatives, business is still confronted with a maze of differing national regimes ranging from the official blind eye, and even connivance at the highest level, to strict enforcement of tough anti-corruption laws.

Particularly in this digital age of instant communication, we reject the argument that what would be morally unthinkable in one country must be accepted as part of the way of doing things in another. We are troubled by the tilted playing field on which international business now has to operate.

Yet much that is positive has happened in the past couple of years. On the government side, leading industrial countries belonging to the OECD agreed in 1994 that they should suppress bribery in international business transactions. Last year they called for a ban on what amounts to officially sanctioned corruption — the tax deductibility of bribes.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are committed to the anti-corruption drive. They have the muscle that comes from funds that can be withheld.

How to keep free of corruption and remain competitive is high on the agenda in corporate boardrooms. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) introduced the first business

code to combat extortion and bribery in international transactions in 1977. It is now urging its thousands of members all over the world to apply an updated and strengthened set of rules.

The idea is that the ICC's rules — which have been expressly endorsed by our council representing business in 130 countries — should be written into internal corporate codes of practice that employees are required to observe.

For business and governments alike the important thing is the will to enforce. We call upon governments to follow through on the recommendations laid down by the OECD. Specifically, that means criminalising the bribery of foreign public officials and eliminating tax deductibility for all bribes, foreign and domestic. Tax deductibility is little more than a government subsidy of improper activities. It must be stopped.

The tide is starting to turn in the fight against corruption, but decisive steps are needed. If business and government act in concert, we can win this battle.

The writer is secretary-general of the International Chamber of Commerce. The above article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

Majali emphasises investment

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Sunday visited the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Supply and met with Minister Hani Mulki and his senior assistants. The premier emphasised the need for doubling efforts in order to encourage investments and simplify procedures.

Noting that the government will soon be offering incentives to investors, Dr. Majali urged the ministry to benefit from other nations' experiences in attracting investments.



Prime Minister Majali (in kufiyyeh) discussing economic issues with Minister Mulki and Trade and Industry Ministry Secretary General Mohammed Smadi (Petra photo)

High oil prices give reprieve to Arab Gulf economies

ABU DHABI (AFP) — High oil prices have given a temporary relief to Gulf economies which were jolted by weak prices over the past decade and huge payments for two wars in the region, experts have said.

But the price surge is not enough to spur long-term sustainable growth in the economies of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, making it imperative for them to push ahead with reforms, they said.

"The current improvement in oil prices is only a temporary relief to the economies of the GCC countries, which have suffered from a sharp slowdown in growth rates, persistent deficits in their budgets and balances of payments, and a drainage in their coffers," a Riyadh-based economist said.

"The achievements recorded in 1996 were reminiscent of those during the oil boom," he added.

"But you cannot guarantee the same performance in the coming years as crude prices could weaken again. This should prompt Gulf countries to pursue reforms with the same serious pace announced in the early 1990s," the economist emphasised.

The economies of GCC states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — surged by at least

eight per cent in 1996 while their deficits were cut and coffers overfilled with an extra \$12 billion because of a rise in oil prices of more than \$3 a barrel.

The situation was in contrast with 1993 and 1994, when some GCC economies recorded negative growth rates and their deficits widened.

The GCC economy suffered a heavy blow in 1991 as member states, mainly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, spent by more than \$65 billion for a U.S.-led offensive to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi invasion forces.

GCC states also paid billions of dollars to bankroll Iraq's 1980-1988 war against Iran.

Bankers said GCC states need to focus on three main goals in their reforms: Privatisation of public institutions, attracting capital, mainly for industrial enterprises, and diversification of their sources of income.

"Privatisation means economic activity will no longer be dependent on government spending and the private sector will then be self-sustained instead of remaining reliant on public expenditure," an Abu Dhabi-based banker said.

Oman, embarking on the biggest reform programme in the region, has given more access to foreign investors and is planning to expand the scope for them.

Egyptian premier seeks investment from Asian states

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal Al Ganzuri left Sunday for Malaysia, the first leg of a ten-day Asian tour which will also take him to Singapore and China.

Dr. Ganzuri told reporters at Cairo airport that he wanted to persuade the "Asian Tigers" to invest in Egypt and prove to them Cairo's ability to give benefits to foreign investment.

He was accompanied by a large delegation of businessmen for the first Asian tour by an Egyptian premier in 33 years.

He was expected to sign agreements to promote and protect joint investments, eliminate double taxation and increase trade, as well to promote textile, cement

and agricultural projects in Egypt, the Egyptian news agency MENA said.

In Beijing, he will discuss "setting up a free-trade zone in China for trading Egyptian products in Asia," it said.

In 1995, Egyptian exports to China were worth only \$12.1 million while imports came to \$429.6 million.

Egypt exported \$11.2 million of goods to Malaysia in the same year and imported \$272.1 million of Malaysian goods in return.

Between January and October 1996, Egyptian exports to Singapore stood at \$107.4 million while imports from Singapore were valued at \$102.8 million.

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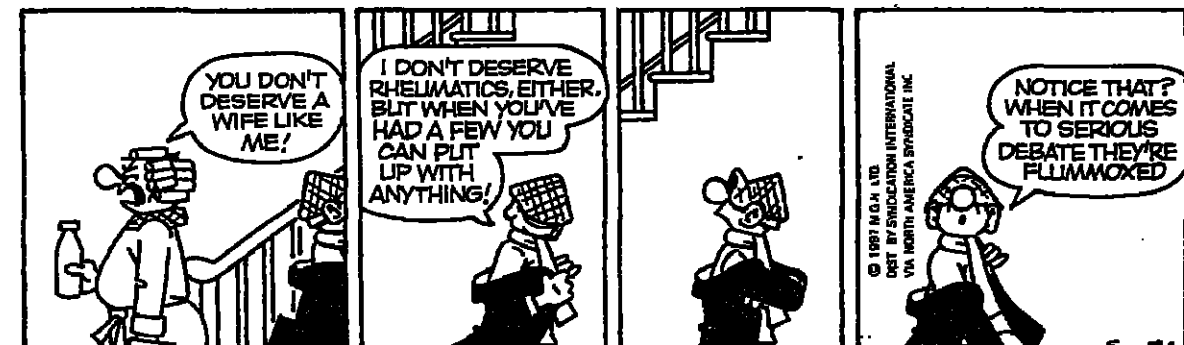


Amra Forum Hotel Shops, Amman.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	YEN
US Dollar	1.7220	0.6146	1.4598	126.11	1.3977	1696.90	1.3380	5.7890	
DE Mark	0.5807	1.0000	0.6366	0.8476	0.7323	0.8112	0.9485	1.1240	3.3611
GB Sterling	1.6271	2.8005	1.0000	2.3840	2.0490	2.2742	2.7613	3.1501	9.4193
CH Franc	0.8850	1.1782	0.8308	86.37	0.8988	1161.82	132.13	3.8629	
JP Yen	0.0078	1.3644	0.4267	1.1566	1.1074	13.45	153.40	4.8868	
CA Dollar	0.7194	1.2316	0.6363	1.0441	1.11	1213.83	1.3846	4.1403	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0142	0.3817	0.0860	1347.16	0.8232	11.40	3.4088	
NL Guilder	0.2168	0.8192	0.3172	76.40	0.6111	0.7219	876.27	2.8694	
FR Franc	0.1727	0.2974	0.1061	25.2081	21.76	0.2414	33.43	33.4300	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	YEN
US Dollar	0.7080	3.7862	0.3770	3.6400	0.3039	3.6725	1540.00	3.3907	
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	8.2908	0.3324	5.1412	0.4293	5.1871	2178.14	4.7881	
GB Sterling	0.2867	0.1888	0.1005	0.97	0.0810	0.98	410.84	0.9041	
Bahrain Dinar	2.86	1.6781	0.9463	8.86	0.8062	9.74	4085.21	8.9646	
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	0.1033	1.0303	0.0835	1.01	423.08	0.9315	
Kuwait Dinar	3.2903	2.3296	1.2394	1.2404	1.186	12.08	5067.12	0.9315	
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1828	0.1026	0.9912	0.0828	1.01	419.33	0.9233	
Lebanese 1000	0.45	0.4597	0.2432	0.2448	0.2358	1.1974	2.3947	2.3947	
Egyptian	0.2349	0.2088	0.1100	0.1112	0.0896	1.0831	454.18		

Energy									
	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	YEN
Brent	17.70	17.50							
WTI	19.45	19.50							
Bony	17.70	17.50							
Dubai	16.25	16.05							
UL Gas	189.00	189.00							

Mid-East Currencies									
	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	YEN
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4894	0.16388	0.38853	0.38542				
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48919	0.16735	0.39777	0.39777				
KW Dinar	3.2903	2.3296	1.2394	1.2404	1.186				
BH Dinar	0.3770	0.57038	0.30206	0.37447	0.37447				
CY Pound	1.9482	3.3545	1.1966	2.844	2.844				

Metal Prices									
	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	YEN
Gold (oz's)	348.7	347.2							
Silver (oz's)	4.73	4.75							
Platinum (oz's)	368.75	368.75							
AL (3 Months)	1567	1570							
CU (3 Months)	2274	2279							
Zinc (3 Months)	1233	1238							
Lead (3 Months)	633	637							
Ni (3 Months)	7245	7275							

Main Equity Indices									
	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	YEN
New York	DOW JONES	6381.89	-148.38	-2.27	6537.7	6387	6540.06		
New York	S&P 500	737.58	-20.68	-2.73	768.34	737.54	758.34		
London	FT-SE 100	4270.7	-42.5	-0.99	4336.1	4288.8	4313.2		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	17846.38	381.23	2.07	17869	17447.8	17485.8		
Paris	CAC 40	2574.56	-33.41	-1.28	2617.86	2569.22	2607.97		
Frankfurt	DAX	3348.85	-11.44	-0.34	3388.32	3336.91	3351.49		

Energy									
	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	ITL	FRF	ESP	YEN
Coffee (c/lbs)	193.83	Spot							
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1435	Spot							
Sugar (\$/ton)	313.8	Spot							
Wheat (\$/ton)	22.59	Spot							
Soya (c/lbs)	142	Spot							
Tea (c/lbs)	142	Spot							
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot							
Rice (\$/ton)	486	Spot							

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Rib donor
- Satirist Mort
- Funniness
- Tableland
- Canadian tribe
- Winged
- At a distance
- Horse color
- Relative value
- Compassionate trait
- Playground equipment
- Pacifist
- Pigment
- Baby
- Entertain
- Ridicule
- Melody
- Bojangle's forte
- Cosmetic ingredient
- Opposed
- Map collection
- Annoy
- Leaf cluster
- Tennis great
- Japanese hostess
- Seafood item: var.
- Put forth
- Bard's river
- Skeppist's concern
- Donnybrook
- Pick up
- Harbinger
- alla
- Fast planes
- Tear into pieces

by Samuel K. Flegner

POSH MESA SCALA
ERTE ALAN ERGOT
SEER RANT LEARN
TOWERING INFERNO
SAY ALL
ALA PILLAGE ALP
GENT MAID SENOR
HIGHRENAISSANCE
AGREE CREE POKE
SHY PRESUME YEN
ATA EVE
TALLINTHESADDLE
ORIEL HIRT GOAL
MADRE EDIE EVIL
BLOTS NEER REDE

11 Sailor
12 Comelia — Skinner
13 Vintage autos
21 Netherworld
22 Madonna role
26 Harrow rival
28 Datum
29 Seed cover
30 Historic caravel
31 Labels
32 Speed letters
33 Harbor wall
34 Flying saucers
35 Proofreader's word
37 — behind the ears
38 Personal: pref.
41 Severe
42 In the altogether
47 Barfin's — Parade
49 Go-between
51 Makes better
52 Master of rock

54 Blood of the gods
55 Sticky mud
56 Refuge
57 Revise

58 Trailer
59 Yoked animals
60 Sensed
61 Kind of surgeon
62 Attic

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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, APRIL 14, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righer Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) This afternoon, be sure to avoid any disagreements you will later regret. Spend later this evening at home in the company of your loved ones and you could have a wonderful time just having pleasant conversations.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your fellow associates will be very cooperative today, however be cautious in the handling of any financial or credit matters. Later this evening will be a good time for you to meet with close friends and have fun at recreational activities.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You should not become involved in any overly-expensive recreations today, which could put your financial situation in a serious condition. Make better plans for a present project before trying to finish it.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Tempers are apt to be short at this time, so use diplomacy and tact if friends come to visit. Try to maintain harmony at home with your mate and those guests who are invited into it for any recreational activities.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You may get little cooperation from others today, so plan to rely upon yourself concerning any career activities. Any visits or errands should be handled early in the day, so that you will have plenty of time to accomplish your duties.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Get your business affairs in better order today, however wait before taking any definite action and thereby avoid any difficulties. You will be more sure of yourself in days ahead for you to become successful.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You can achieve a great deal today by putting a little enthusiasm into your daily routines which will get noticed by a bigwig. Take it easy later this evening and get plenty of rest for the days ahead are likely to be stressful.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Put your faith in those persons who have been loyal companions in the times before and thereby you can depend upon their advice. Pay special attention to the details of your career activities and you can be successful.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you need a favour today from a close friend, this morning would be the ideal time to ask for it. Take it easy and rest up later this evening for there will be quite a lot of career activities which need your attention.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Be sure to handle your bills and other credit matters today before you attend to daily chores. Avoid a superior who has an ax to grind and you are the perfect person who he or she wants to make an example at this time.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You have many good ideas today concerning how to get ahead, so investigate carefully and follow through with the best of them. Later this evening will be good for you to get together with close friends and have a fun time.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Be more cooperative than usual today with a fellow business associate and you can both make rapid progress. Be sure to drive very carefully while on the highway and thereby avoid any difficulties to occur.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Group 3 World Cup qualifiers Jordan targets win against Bahrain today

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

JORDAN PLAYS hosts Bahrain Monday concluding the last match of Group 3 first round/first leg Asian World Cup qualifiers currently underway in Manama, Bahrain.

Winning the match is crucial for the Kingdom's team to stay in contention for the only qualifying berth from Group 3.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) currently lead the three-team group after defeating Bahrain 2-1.

The second leg of the qualifiers start in Sharjah, UAE, April 19 with only the group winner qualifying to the second round.

The UAE will be hoping that both teams draw to stay atop the standings with 4 points. Jordan needs to win to draw with the UAE in overall points going into the second leg while defeat for Bahrain would end their qualifying chances altogether.

Jordan held the UAE to a goalless draw with in the opening match of the qualifiers, a result that was regarded as a good showing for the Kingdom's team facing the 1990 World Cup qualifier and currently Asia's second ranked team.

This is the fourth time Jordan plays in World Cup qualifying matches after taking part in first round qualifiers for Mexico 96, Italy 90, and USA 94.

Jordan's record in eight friendly internationals in preparation for the qualifiers included three defeats, three goalless draws and two wins, both over Oman.

The Kingdom's team played two matches against Lebanon losing 1-0 and drawing 0-0.

Jordan twice lost 1-0 to the Iraqi team while both matches against Syria ended in goalless draws.

The Kingdom's only wins were 2-0 and 4-1 in Muscat.

Thirty-six Asian countries are contesting the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups. Some groups have already begun their qualifiers.

Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.

Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.

Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.

Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao.

Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.

Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.
Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.
Group 8: China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan.
Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan.
Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round where the teams will be divided into two groups.

The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

Jordan's 31-member delegation includes nine officials including referee Dahham Egeidat, team manager Abullatif Abdul Majid, coaches Mohammad Awad and Adnan Masud, goalkeepers' coach Basem Tayyem, and physiotherapist Hussein Attallah.

The Kingdom's lineup includes Mu'taz Risbeh, Yousef Ammouri, Mohannad Mahadin, Amjad Taher, Hussein Shanineh, Faisal Ibrahim, Subhi Suleiman, Jamal Abu Abed, Adnan Awad, Nari Yada, Jiryes Tadros and Badran Shaqran, Ahmad Abu Nasoud, Mohammad Abu Daoud, Mohammad Khaz'ali, Abdallah Abu Zame'h, Isam Mahmoud, Munir Abu Hantash, Bassam Al Khatib, Ahmad Khalil, Ja'far Hammad and Hassounah Sheikh.

ITV coverage of Group 3 matches

First leg in Bahrain
Bahrain — Jordan April 14 5:15 p.m.

Second leg in Sharjah
Bahrain — Jordan April 19 5:00 p.m.
UAE — Bahrain April 22 5:00 p.m.
UAE — Jordan April 26 5:00 p.m.

GROUP 3 STANDINGS

Team	W	L	D	GF	GA	pts
UAE	1	-	1	2	1	4
Jordan	-	-	1	-	-	1
Bahrain	-	1	-	1	2	1

Iverson scores 50 but Sixers lose to Cleveland

CLEVELAND (R) — Allen Iverson scored 50 points, broke a record set by Wilt Chamberlain and declared himself rookie of the year, but his Philadelphia 76ers still lost 125-118 to the Cleveland Cavaliers on Saturday.

The usually low-scoring Cavaliers bettered 30 points in all but the third quarter to move into a tie with Washington for the final playoff berth in the Eastern Conference.

Iverson scored at least 40 points for the fourth consecutive game, breaking the mark set by the legendary Chamberlain in the 1959-60 season, and joined Michael Jordan as the only players to score 50 points in a game this season.

"When I looked up and saw I had a chance to get 50 points, my teammates wanted me to get it and they did a great job of getting me the ball," Iverson said.

Iverson shot 17-of-32 from the field, including 5-of-9 from three-point range and added 11 free throws, becoming the first rookie to score 50 points since Elvin Hayes had 54 for the San Diego Rockets in 1968.

"I think I am the rookie of the year," Iverson said. "The rookie award belongs to me. There was some doubt, so I stepped things up a little bit."

Chris Mills scored 25 points and Terrell Brandon added 22 for the Cavs, who opened a 20-point first-half lead and withstood a 39-point second half by Iverson.

In Orlando, Gerald Wilkins scored 22 points and Rony Seikaly had 21 points and 19 rebounds as the Magic clinched a playoff berth with a 121-98 victory over the Boston Celtics.

Horace Grant added 21 points for the Magic, who hold the seventh playoff spot in the East and can finish no higher.

Antoine Walker scored 25 for the Celtics, who have lost 11 of their last 12 and fell to 0-23 against Atlantic Division foes. A loss at Philadelphia next Friday would make the once proud Celtics the first NBA team ever to go winless in its division.

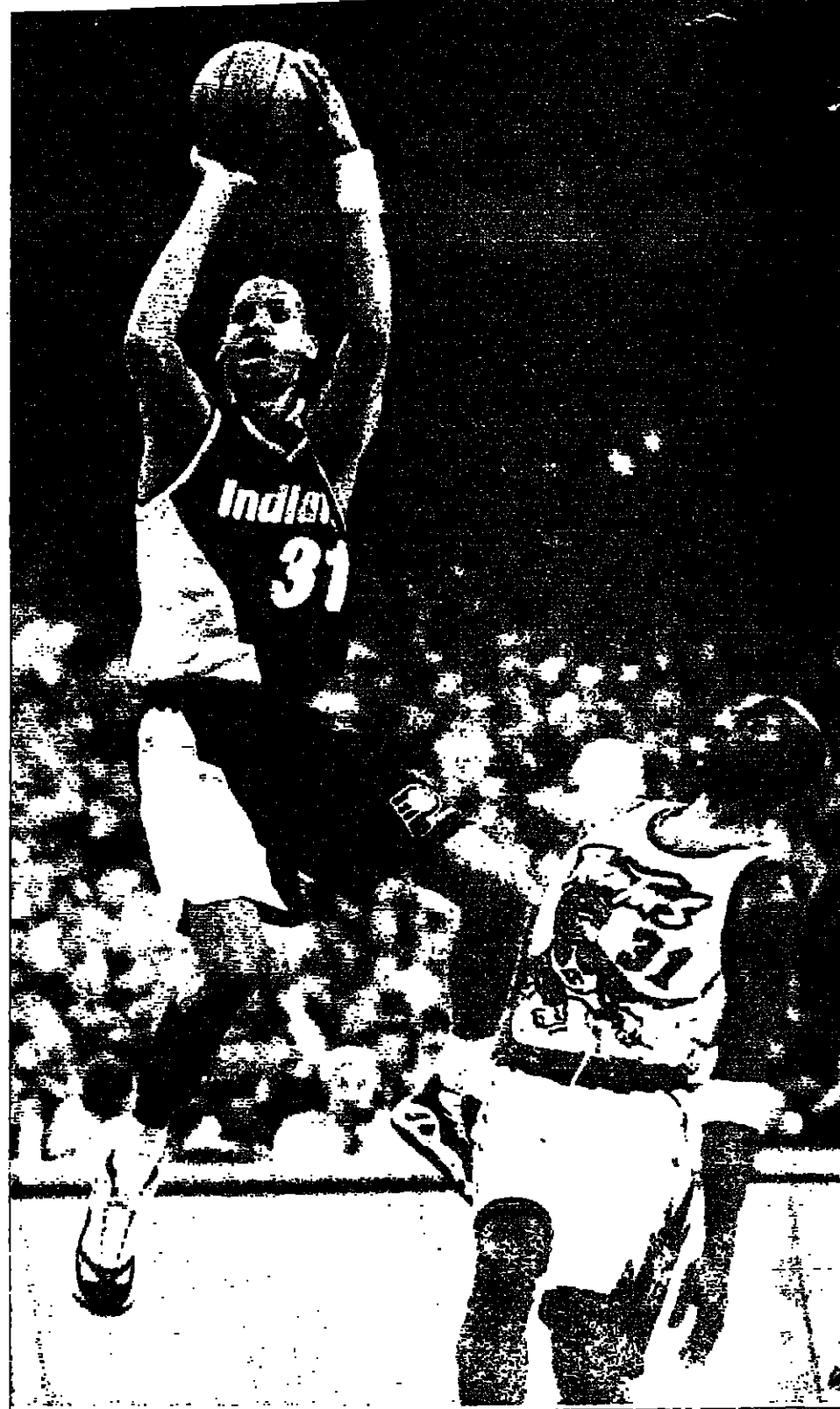
At Minnesota, Steve Smith scored 25 points and the Hawks limited the Minnesota Timberwolves to a franchise-low 66 points in a 80-66 victory that kept Atlanta tied for third place in the east with the New York Knicks.

Kevin Garnett had 21 points and 15 rebounds and Tom Gugliotta added 15 points for the Timberwolves, whose scored four fewer points than their previous low but remained in sixth place in the West, half a game in front of Phoenix.

In Miami, Patrick Ewing had 25 points and 10 rebounds and teamed with Allan Houston to fuel a big third quarter as the New York Knicks edged the Heat 100-99, ending Miami's six-game winning streak.

Ewing, who thoroughly outplayed Miami centre Alonzo Mourning, scored nine points and Houston 10 in the third quarter, when the Knicks outscored the Heat 30-20 to take a 75-66 lead into the final quarter.

Tim Hardaway scored 28



Indiana Pacers' guard Reggie Miller (L) drives to the hoop for two points over Toronto Raptors' guard Shawn Respert during first half NBA action in Toronto. Indiana defeated Toronto 100-89 (Reuters photo)

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
Y-Miami	59	19	.756	-
X-New York	54	24	.692	5
X-Orlando	44	34	.564	15
Washington	40	38	.513	19
New Jersey	24	53	.312	34 1/2
Philadelphia	21	57	.269	38
Boston	14	65	.177	45 1/2

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
YZ-Chicago	68	10	.872	-
X-Atlanta	54	24	.692	14
X-Charlotte	52	26	.667	16
X-Detroit	51	26	.662	16 1/2
Cleveland	40	38	.513	28
Indiana	38	40	.487	30
Milwaukee	30	47	.390	37 1/2
Toronto	28	50	.359	40

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
YZ-Utah	60	17	.779	-
X-Houston	53	25	.679	7 1/2
X-Minnesota	38	40	.487	22 1/2
Dallas 23 55			.295	37 1/2
Denver	20	58	.256	40 1/2
San Antonio	20	58	.256	40 1/2
Vancouver	13	67	.163	48 1/2

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
X-Seattle	54	24	.692	-
X-LA Lakers	53	25	.679	1
X-Portland	46	33	.582	8 1/2
X-Phoenix	38	40	.487	16
LA Clippers	35	43	.449	19
Sacramento	32	46	.410	22
Golden State	29	49	.372	25

X — Clinched Playoff Berth

Y — Clinched Division Title

Z — Clinched Conference Title

points and Voshon Lenard added 24 for Miami.

In San Antonio, Shawn Kemp had 23 points and 12 rebounds and led a late rally as the Seattle SuperSonics held the Spurs to two points over the final four minutes for a 96-91 victory.

Gary Payton had 21 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Sonics, who blew an 18-point third-quarter lead but recovered for their fourth win in five games to open a one-game lead over the second-place Lakers in the Pacific

Division.

In Toronto, Rik Smits scored 23 points and had key consecutive baskets a crunch time as the Indiana Pacers kept their playoff hopes alive with a 100-89 win over the Raptors.

Reggie Miller added 21 for Indiana, which broke open a close game with a 12-0 run at the outset of the second half.

The Pacers are two games behind Washington and Cleveland in the battle for the final playoff spot in the East.

In Charlotte, Ricky Pierce sank a three-pointer with six seconds left as the Hornets extended their season-high winning streak to seven games by beating the Washington Bullets 99-97.

Vlade Divac had 21 points and nine rebounds and Pierce finished with 29 points as Charlotte moved one-half game ahead of the Detroit for fifth place in the Eastern conference.

In Los Angeles, Rodney Rogers scored 26 points and Lorenzen Wright had 23 and 14 rebounds as the Clippers beat the Denver Nuggets 116-94 to inch closer to a playoff spot.

Rogers was 5-of-5 from three-point range and Malik Sealy chipped in 19 points for the Clippers, who with their next win can clinch only their third playoff berth since the franchise moved west from Buffalo in 1978.

In Dallas, Shareef Abdur-Rahim scored 30 points and grabbed a career-high 12 rebounds as the Vancouver Grizzlies snapped a nine-game losing streak and made sure to avoid a 70-loss season by beating the Mavericks 96-85.

Robert Pack scored 22 points and Shawn Bradley added 20 and 13 rebounds for Dallas, loser of 13 of its last 14 games.

Becker to make comeback attempt at Japan Open

TOKYO (AFP) — Three-time Wimbledon champion Boris Becker will make a comeback attempt after a wrist injury by spearheading the Japan Open tennis tournament with Richard Krajicek starting here Monday.

It will be the first tournament for the 29-year-old German star after he abandoned a quarter-final match at Dubai in February with a recurrence of the injury to his right hitting arm.

Becker first picked up the injury at Wimbledon last year. His pain returned at the Australian Open, where he failed to defend the title in the first round.

"The wrist is fine," said second-seeded Becker Sunday after a practice match on the Ariake Coliseum centre court.

Becker and the other top seven seeds will receive first-round byes before making their appearances, vying for the first prize of \$154,000.

The German will take on either Stephane Simian of France or Sebastien Lareau of Canada in the second round.

Also in the bottom half of the draw with Becker are Barcelona Olympic gold medalist Marc Rosset of Switzerland, third seed, Thomas Johansson of Sweden, fifth seed, and Martin Damm of the Czech Republic, seventh seed.

Krajicek, current Wimbledon champion from the Netherlands, seeks to restore his pride after a second-round defeat in India. He will take on the winner between Andrei Pavel of Romania and Neville Godwin of South Africa.

He was drawn with eighth-seeded David



Boris Becker

Prinosil of Germany, and Leander Paes, India's only medalist at the Atlanta Olympics.

Australia's Todd Woodbridge, fourth seed, and Patrick Rafter, sixth seed, are also in the top half of the draw with him.

To the disappointment of the fans, World No. 1 and defending champion Pete Sampras withdrew. The American suffered a wrist injury at key Biscayne.

Thomas Enqvist withdrew following Nausea at the Indian Open Thursday, while Magdalena Maleeva

of Bulgaria pulled out with a fracture of her left wrist.

The women's event is led by two-time Olympic doubles champion Mary Joe Fernandez, whose major threats come from fellow Americans Kimberly Po and Amy Frazier, and Japan's No. 1 Ai Sugiyama.

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL:634144
PHILADELPHIA "1"

Billy Zane &
Kristy Swanson... in

THE PHANTOM

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:634144
PHILADELPHIA "2"

Hugh Grant &
Julianne Moore..... in

NINE MONTHS

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238
PLAZA

Mel Gibsonin

RANSOM

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420
CONCORD

CONCORD "1"
**MADONNA &
ANTONIO BANDERAS...IN
EVITA** (new print)

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30

SPACE JAM

Shows: 3:30, 6:00

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre
TEL: 625155

The play is currently being
performed in Qatar
We will be back during
Al Adha Holiday
For reservations call 625155



Colorado Rockies' runner Eric Young (21) steals third base during the first inning against Montreal Expos third baseman Shane Andrews in Denver. Young scored the game's first run on teammate Andres Galarra's two-RBI single (Reuters photo)

Mariners win on Red Sox miscues in 10th

BOSTON (R) — Pinch-runner Rich Amaral scored from second on pitcher Jim Corsi's throwing error to spark a four-run 10th inning as the Seattle Mariners beat the Boston Red Sox 5-1 on Saturday, a day in which five of the seven scheduled American League games were rained out.

Jeff Fassero allowed just two hits over nine innings for Seattle in a game which was a pitcher's duel most of the way.

Fassero (2-0) gave up just two walks and struck out six over nine innings. He retired 21 consecutive batters before Rudy Pemberton's one-out double in the eighth.

Fassero gave up Boston's lone run way back in the first inning when John Valentin drew one of Fassero's two walks, moved to third on a Mo Vaughn single and scored on Mike Stanley's sacrifice fly.

Seattle tied it in the third

off starter John Wasdin, who allowed one run and three hits over seven innings. Russ Davis led off with a double and scored on Alex Rodriguez's double.

The score stayed 1-1 until the 10th.

Dan Wilson led off the 10th with a double. Amaral pinch ran for Wilson and scored when Corsi threw wildly to third on Davis's sacrifice attempt.

"The bunt came back to me, I got off the mound quick, I just made a bad throw," Corsi said. "It's a shame ... It was just one play."

Davis later scored on a Rodriguez single and with the bases loaded reliever Pat Mahomes hit Ken Griffey, forcing home another run. Edgar Martinez's sacrifice fly made it 5-1.

In Kansas City, Pat Meares smacked a three-run homer in the sixth inning and Greg Colbrunn had a two-run double in a five-run

eight to lead the Minnesota Twins to an 11-6 pounding of the Royals.

Kansas City scored three in the fifth to grab a 4-3 lead, but Minnesota answered with three in the sixth on Meares's three-run shot with two outs off starter Tim Lincecum (1-1) to take the lead for good.

Todd Ritchie (2-1) earned the victory, pitching 1 1/3 scoreless innings in the game which was played in near freezing temperatures.

"It was awful cold, I'm glad no one got hurt," Twins manager Tom Kelly said. "Meares had a nice day for us. That three-run homer was a big hit for us."

"My first two at-bats I hit it off the end of the bat and I couldn't feel eight of my 10 fingers," Meares said.

The Twins pushed across five more runs in the eighth for an 11-4 lead, ignited by Colbrunn's two-run double off reliever Jason Jacome.

Radulescu into first ATP final

MADRAS (R) — Alex Radulescu stormed into his first ATP Tour final on Saturday with a 6-3, 6-2 win over unseeded Frenchman Gerard Solves in the Indian Open semifinals.

Fifth seed Radulescu will play Swedish sixth seed Mikael Tillstrom, who beat unseeded Romanian Andrei Pavel 6-3, 6-3 in the other semifinal.

Romanian-born Radulescu, world ranked 58th said: "I am obviously glad to make my first final of the (ATP) Tour. Last year I reached the semifinals of the Indian Open and now look forward to winning the title. Tillstrom ended a seed-scalping spree by Pavel, who had ousted top seed and Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands and seventh-seeded Magnus Norman of Sweden on his way to the semifinals.

AMELIA ISLAND, Florida (R) — Sixth seed Lindsay Davenport powered her way into the final of the Bausch Lomb championships, where she will meet 11th seed Mary Pierce, who barely survived her semifinal on Saturday.

Eighth-ranked Olympic champion Davenport shook off a slow start and overpowered 12th seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa 7-5, 6-2 in 85 minutes.

Pierce, runner-up here last year, rallied from behind in both the second and third sets and saved a match point before pulling out a 2-6, 7-5, 7-6 victory over her close friend Iva Majoli of Croatia, the eighth seed.

"I'm happy I hung in there," said Pierce after surviving the two hour and 32 minute match with a lot of help from untimely double faults by Majoli.

"Yesterday, we laughed about playing the match. We said somebody has to win," said the 15th-ranked Pierce, this year's Australian Open runner-up who returned for this tournament after a five-week layoff with a thigh injury.

The 14th-ranked Coetzer jumped out to an early 4-1 lead against Davenport, who stands a full foot (30 cm) taller than the swift but compact South African.

The American began going for her shots in a big way after that, pummeling Coetzer with a steady barrage of high-speed winners as Davenport reeled off the next nine games and won 12 of the last 15 overall.

"I started to take the ball early," said Davenport, who will go for her third title of the year and first on clay Sunday. "I was hitting the ball hard and deep and con-

trolling the match."

Said Coetzer: "It's hard to see her ball coming at you at that speed. You feel rushed because the ball comes back so fast."

Majoli dominated Pierce during the first set of their semifinal and held leads of 4-2 in the second and 4-1 in an error-filled third over the Canadian-born Frenchwoman.

But the Croatian misfired with 12 double faults, including an agonising one at match point when she was serving at 5-4, 40-30 in the third set.

"I choked a little bit on my serve," said Majoli, showing a flare for understatement.

Her first serve at match point dumped into the bottom of the net and the second serve barely reached the net. Majoli double faulted four times in that 10-

point game.

"The worst thing is I started so good," lamented Majoli. "The only thing that was disappointing was I had so many chances."

Pierce also had a tough time, basically handing Majoli a 4-1 lead in the third set with a string of unforced errors in a very loose service game. But the Croatian had plenty of time to return the favour, coming up empty while serving for the match at 5-4 and again at 6-5.

In the tie-break, Pierce reached her lone match point when Majoli smacked a forehand long to make it 6-5. Majoli then sailed a return long to hand Pierce the match.

"I'm happy with the match even though I didn't play as good as I could," Pierce said.

Rain halts Chang's victory in Hong Kong

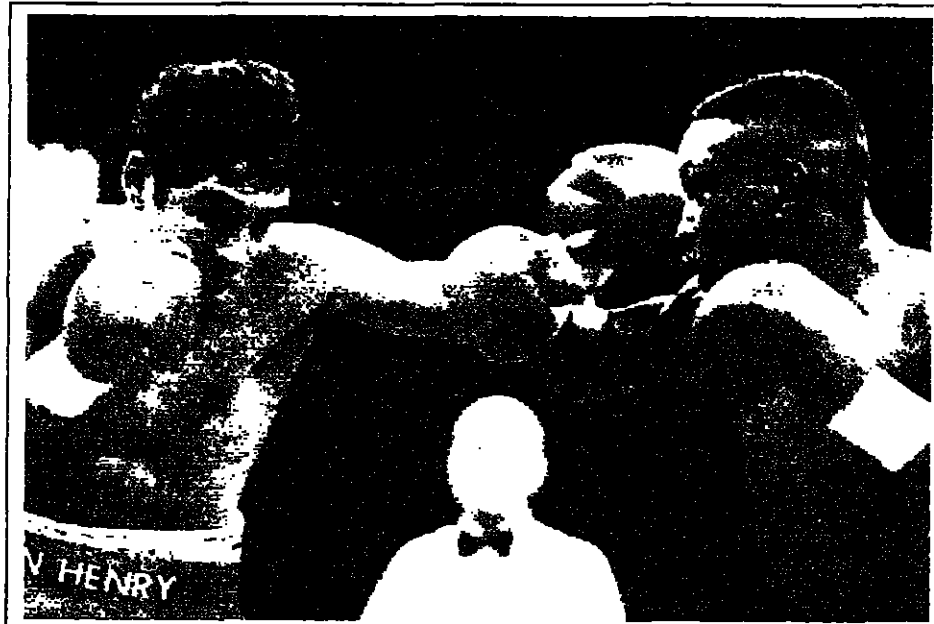
HONG KONG (R) — Top seed Michael Chang of the United States was on the verge of victory over Australia's Patrick Rafter when rain stopped play in the final of the Hong Kong Open on Sunday.

Chang, bidding to add to his triumphs in Memphis and Indian Wells earlier this year, was 6-3, 5-3 ahead and held two match points when a sudden downpour halted the action.

The world number three had gained the upper hand over the fifth-seeded Rafter with a fine display of baseline tennis against the serve and volleyer.

Chang delighted his Hong Kong fans with a series of passing shots and several effective lobs as he carved out a comfortable lead.

The match, a repeat of the 1994 final which Chang won, was twice interrupted by rain. On the second occasion officials waited three hours before abandoning play until Monday morning with Chang requiring just one point to clinch his third Hong Kong Open title.



DE LA HOYA WINS WBC WELTERWEIGHT TITLE: Oscar De La Hoya (L) and Pernell Whitaker battle for the WBC Welterweight championship title in Las Vegas. Oscar de La Hoya kept his round perfect and claimed a world title in a fourth different weight class by capturing Pernell Whitaker's World Boxing Council welterweight crown with a unanimous decision (Reuters photo)

Walker hits league-leading homer as Rockies win again

DENVER (R) — Larry Walker kept up his torrid early-season home run pace to help the surging Colorado Rockies out slug the Montreal Expos 12-8 on Saturday for their seventh consecutive victory.

Walker hit his league-leading seventh homer and ending Vinnie Castilla's matched Walker's two-run shot with his fifth in a four-run second inning that followed a four-run first.

"I don't think when different teams face me they consider me a home run threat," Walker said. "Let's see how long it continues. I let you know if I'm a slugger come October and we total them up."

Kirt Manwaring had four of Colorado's 13 hits and drove in two runs and Andres Galarra delivered a two-run single for the Rockies, who have gone undefeated since dropping the first two games of the season on the road.

Jamey Wright (2-0) picked up the victory despite allowing six runs and 11 hits over seven innings.

"I wasn't really happy with my numbers," said Wright, who had trouble pitching in bluer cold after trying to bat.

"I hit it off the end of the bat and my fingers went numb. The first two hitters (I pitched to), I couldn't feel my middle fingers, and I thought, 'I hope this goes away real quick.'"

Jim Bullinger (0-2) was rocked for eight runs, six hits and four walks in just 1 2/3 innings and suffered the loss.

David Segui and Rondell White hit solo homers to pace Montreal's 14-hit attack. The Expos (3-5) have lost five in a row after opening the season with three wins.

In Cincinnati, Pokey Reese, recalled from the minors earlier in the day, made the most of his first big-league hit by driving in the winning run in the 10th

inning to lift the Reds to a 2-1 victory over the Florida Marlins.

Reese, starting at shortstop in place of injured star Barry Larkin, smacked a two-out single down the right-field line in the bottom of the 10th, bringing home Eric Owens and ending Cincinnati's five-game losing streak and Florida's five-game winning streak.

"It's a dream come true," said Reese. "First big-league hit and RBI and it wins the game."

Reds starter Mike Morgan

allowed a run on four hits in 5-1/3 innings, with Stan Belinda, Mike Remlinger, Jeff Shaw and winner Hector Carrasco holding the potent Florida offense hitless the rest of the way.

In Chicago, Jeff Blauser singled home Ryan Klesko from second with two outs in the ninth inning as the Atlanta Braves kept the Cubs winless with a 2-1 victory.

Chicago has lost its first nine games for the worst start in team history, while the Braves improved to 7-3.

In St. Louis, Bobby Abreu had a pinch-hit bases-loaded triple in a four-run sixth inning and Ramon Garcia pitched five solid innings in his first National League start as the Houston Astros held on for a 7-5 victory

over the Cardinals.

Jeff Bagwell smacked a solo homer in the third and scored twice for the Astros.

Abreu was batting for

Garcia (1-0), who gave up

two runs and four hits in

picking up the win.

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
AAQ4 QAKQ Q522 4A102
Partner opens the bidding with one spade. What do you respond?
A. - You have a very fine hand indeed, but have no idea yet where to place the contract. While it looks as if your side is going to declare in spades, possibly at the 3-2 level, diamonds or no trump could be equally viable. To leave as much room as possible to explore, bid two clubs.

Q.2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
AAS QQS QK76 4AK1075
Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one spade. What action do you take?
A. - When your holding in opener's suit is a doubleton and a one-no-trump overall is not appealing. The question is whether you should double despite the fact that you would like to hold a fourth heart, or bid two clubs, which tends to suggest a better suit and an unbalanced hand. We prefer the double.

Q.3 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
AAJS QAS QJ965 4AKJ6
The bidding has proceeded:
1♣ 1♥ 2♣ 3♣
What action do you take?
A. - Don't bid three no trump. On the auction partner must be bidding on distributional values and cannot possibly have a suit that will run opposite your jack. To show your strength without bypassing three no trump, we suggest you cue-bid three hearts.

Q.4 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
AAQ42 QAK1075 Q85 46
The bidding has proceeded:
1♣ 1♥ 2♣ 3♣
What action do you take?
A. - It depends on your method. If you play that a response at the one-level would be a force, then bid one spade now and follow with a jump in hearts. If not, the only way to convince partner of your strength is to redouble.

Q.5 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:
AA102 Q1074 QJ976 4AK9
The bidding has proceeded:
1♣ 1♥ 2♣ 3♣
What action do you take?
A. - A surprisingly difficult hand because of the flat shape and no source of tricks. The accepted way to show this type of hand is to start with a cue-bid of two hearts and then consider raising any suit partner bids. Don't be surprised if that gets you overboard, or tortures partner into declaring a 4-3 fit.

Q.6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
AS4 QJ109732 5V4ID 4KJ108
The bidding has proceeded:
1♣ 1♥ 2♣ 3♣
What do you bid now?
A. - Had partner opened the bidding with one no trump, you would have responded four hearts. Since partner's overall shows the same type of hand, albeit with a greater possibility of wasted values in diamonds, there is no reason not to make the same bid now. Bid four hearts.

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Iran 'gives preference' to Russian firms versus traditional European

Hundreds of thousands demonstrate at German embassy; ambassadors recalled on both sides

Combined agency dispatches

IRAN AND Europe are unlikely to allow a row over a German court ruling that Tehran ordered political killings in Berlin in 1992 to go beyond diplomatic moves and hurt commercial ties, diplomats and analysts say.

European Union (EU) members, except Greece, have since Thursday's ruling decided to recall their ambassadors from Tehran for consultations. But they stopped short of imposing trade sanctions against Iran, which France has rejected.

Iran, the world's third largest oil exporter, has said it will reciprocate the ambassador recall by summoning home its top envoys from EU countries.

Analysts and diplomats who follow Iran said they did not believe Europe, which had so far resisted U.S. pressure to impose sanctions on the Islamic republic, would escalate the row beyond the diplomatic moves.

"The European community wants to make a political point to Tehran," one Western diplomat said. "It does not look like it wants to jeopardise trade relations."

They said Iran, which is fighting U.S. attempts to isolate it, would do its best to defuse the crisis.

Diplomats and analysts compared the row to that sparked by the 1989 death edict by Iran's late spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini against British author Salman Rushdie, for alleged blasphemy against Islam in his book "The Satanic Verses."

EU states and Iran at the time withdrew their ambassadors and Iran severed diplomatic ties with Britain.

The Europeans, except for Britain, said a month later they would allow their ambassadors to return to Tehran, but kept a ban on high-level contacts with Iran for another seven months.

Britain and Iran resumed

relations in 1990.

"The verbal war, the diplomatic steps were much stronger then and yet Europe and Iran got over that even though the death edict against Rushdie is officially still in place," one analyst said. "Then the EU members were reluctant to jeopardise their companies' business contracts and I can't see why that should change now."

But the diplomats and analysts cautioned that the current crisis could become harder to resolve as the Berlin court findings were the first by a Western judiciary to directly blame Iran for assassinations of exiled opposition figures.

"This case is more serious than the row over Rushdie... But it looks clear the Iranian government does not want to go any further and will try very hard to find a solution to this," said London-based Iranian journalist, Ali Reza Nourizadeh.

"Iran is becoming closer to Russia and China and the European states don't want to push Iran too much that way."

He said the election of a new president in Iran in May would give a chance to Tehran to "say there is a new leadership, let's open a new chapter."

The diplomats and analysts agreed that neither Europe nor Iran would take a decision on sanctions lightly.

"Despite the political talk, it is the dollar that will decide what happens," Mr. Nourizadeh added.

"The mutual attraction is obvious. European companies have expertise in key oil and power sectors. Iran has oil money and is the largest consumer market in the Gulf," one diplomat said.

The EU relies on Iran for 10 per cent of its oil imports. Iran had a trade surplus of \$1 billion with the EU in 1995.

For Iran any threat to its European sales would spell disaster virtually cutting it off from the Western world. An early indication of the

business community resisting possible sanctions came from Australia where wheat farmers urged the government to reject calls to ban trade with Iran where Australia's wheat market is worth \$390 million a year.

Berlin and Tehran appear keen to avert a total diplomatic break.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said Iran must show respect for international law before Berlin could discuss a fresh start in relations, but he defended the "critical dialogue" championed by Berlin and agreed by the EU in 1992 under the influence of the edict against Mr. Rushdie.

He, however, said Berlin did not want to inflame the crisis and Iran appeared to have the same policy.

Iran, which has repeatedly denied all involvement in the killings, has urged EU states not to jeopardise their interests in Iran over the verdict.

The Iranian plan to recall its EU envoys comes amid growing tensions between Iran and Germany, until recently Tehran's biggest trade partner and closest Western friend.

Bonn has been a staunch advocate of critical dialogue with Iran, a policy which means maintaining good relations and trade ties while also engaging in dialogue over human rights.

Iran's English-language daily Iran News said on Sunday "the diplomatic crisis between the European Union and Iran has begun," but urged EU states not to join an American economic and political campaign to isolate Iran.

"The EU countries will not let the U.S. fuel the fire of the present crisis. Say again a big 'no' to the same U.S. that called on the EU to join its policy in isolating Iran by limiting trade with Tehran," it said.

Washington accuses Tehran of sponsoring international terrorism, a charge which Iran has repeatedly denied.

The court ruling said the assassinations were ordered

by a secret special operations committee whose members included Iran's president, its religious leader, intelligence minister and the head of foreign policy.

But it stopped short of explicitly naming Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, whom prosecutors had accused of ultimate responsibility for the attack in Berlin's Mykonos Restaurant.

Germany has ordered four Iranian diplomats to leave the country and recalled its ambassador in Tehran immediately after the court verdict. Iran also recalled its ambassador and expelled four German diplomats.

Mr. Rafsanjani on Friday criticised the verdict but said the diplomatic row was a "passing storm" provoked by the United States and Israel.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said on Saturday that Iran must show respect for international law before Bonn could discuss a fresh start in relations.

Iran sought Arab support on Sunday in its confrontation with the EU, saying the crisis concerned the whole Middle East region.

The head of the Iranian interests section in Cairo, Akbar Qassemi, met Arab League chief Esmat Abdul Meguid to brief him on "the decision by EU countries to recall their ambassadors from Tehran as well as the dangers and challenges facing all countries in the region, be they Iran or Arab countries," a league official said.

Mr. Qassemi requested the meeting, the first visit by an Iranian official to Arab League headquarters since 1992 when Tehran became embroiled in a territorial dispute with league member the United Arab Emirates, the official said.

After the meeting, Mr. Qassemi refused to comment on the Iranian-EU rift.

(Continued on page 7)

Iranian official linked to bombing suspect

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. and Saudi intelligence authorities have linked a senior Iranian government official to a group of Shiite Muslims suspected of bombing a U.S. military compound in Saudi Arabia last year, the Washington Post reported in its Sunday edition.

U.S. and Arab officials said Brigadier Ahmad Sherif, a senior Iranian intelligence officer and a top official in Iran's Revolutionary Guards, met two years before the bombing with Hani Abdul Rahim Sayegh, a Saudi Shiite arrested in Canada last month as "a direct participant" in the June 25 blast that killed 19 U.S. servicemen.

The intelligence tying Sherif to Sayegh has persuaded a growing number of U.S. and Saudi officials of Iran's direct involvement in the attack at the Khobar Towers housing complex, the newspaper said, quoting U.S. and Arab officials.

"Iran was the organising force behind it," one U.S. official told the paper.

No comment was immediately available on the report from the State Department or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which is the lead U.S. agency on the investigation. Saudi Arabia is handling the investigation since it took place on its territory.

The evidence of Iranian links to the Saudi Shiites suspected in the Khobar bombing includes bank checks signed by Sherif, Arab sources told the Post, although it was unclear whether the checks were given to Sayegh or other suspects.

Much of the information came from intercepts of telephone calls Sayegh made to his wife and family in Saudi Arabia from Canada before he was arrested, the newspaper said.

Unaware his phone was tapped over a seven-month period, Sayegh disclosed details of his role in the bombing and named others with whom he collaborated, the sources told the paper.

The Post quoted the officials as saying the evidence appeared to show a conclusive link to Sherif, also known as Abu Jalal, but one U.S. official said it did not "rise to the level (necessary) for a criminal prosecution."

Canadian court documents contend Sayegh drove a surveillance car behind the explosives-filled tanker used to demolish the Khobar complex. Sayegh denies any involvement and says he was in Syria at the time of the attack.

Sherif's duties include organising Hizbollah cells in Arab countries around the Gulf, the newspaper quoted U.S. and Arab sources as saying. He was implicated during a trial in Bahrain last year for 15 Bahraini Shiite dissidents convicted of several hotel and restaurant bombings which killed more than 20 people.

Separately, the Post reported that a second air force investigation has again exonerated all officers who were responsible for security at Khobar Towers.

The air force reopened its inquiry into whether any officers were negligent in safeguarding the complex against terrorist attack in January, after pressure by top Pentagon officials who were dissatisfied with the initial probe.

The first report concluded that the bombing would have occurred regardless of any chain of command that might have been in effect.

No comment was immediately available from the Defence Department.



LEA PUBLISHED: Widow of slain Israeli premier Yitzhak Rabin. Lea poses for photographers late on Saturday in Hamburg, with a copy of her book — a Biography of her Husband — which she is currently promoting in Germany during a three-day visit (AFP photo)

Religious Israeli Jews lose court case to secularists

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's religious community suffered a setback in their cultural war with secular Jews Sunday when the supreme court ruled to keep a major Jerusalem highway open on the Jewish Sabbath.

A seven-judge panel rejected a recommendation by Transportation Minister Yitzhak Levy that the Bar Ilan Road be closed on Saturdays to respect the feelings of ultra-Orthodox Jews living along it.

However, the ultra-Orthodox community, which has staged violent protests against motorists on Bar Ilan, vowed to fight on.

Observant Jews do not drive on the Sabbath, as under strict Jewish law respect for the day of rest means no operation of machinery.

Bar Ilan has become the front line in the battle between ultra-Orthodox and secular Jews over how far religious law should be imposed in Israel.

The closure of the road was one of the top issues demanded by religious parties when they agreed to join Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing coalition last June.

Left-wing leaders warned that it would harm the rights of most Israelis who are secular.

In the court decision, six judges ruled that Mr. Minister Levy, a member of the National Religious Party, had not taken into consideration the interests of local secular residents whose guests visiting on the Sabbath would have difficulties reaching them if the road were closed.

"This is a win for the secular in one aspect of the cultural war," said Professor Eliezer Don-Yehiya of Bar Ilan University, an expert on religious affairs. "But it is not over yet."

Religious leaders warned the battle to close the road would intensify with massive demonstrations like those in the past that have flared into violence between the Orthodox and police trying to keep them from blocking the road.

"The authorities will have no choice," Mr. Don-Yehiya said. "In order to keep order, they will have to close the road."

In the end, the major thoroughfare connecting north and central

Jerusalem will be closed, members of the Orthodox community insisted.

Avraham Ravitz of the coalition-member United Torah Judaism Party warned that, if Mr. Levy was unable to reach a viable solution with the court, the religious parties in the government would have no choice but to draft a law that would bypass the court decision.

"If it is not closed, we will demand a change in the law," Mr. Ravitz told AFP. "The law would give municipalities the right to close their streets, even in religious matters."

The decision should be in the hands of the government and the Knesset where we know how to live together and can reach a resolution," Mr. Ravitz added.

Secular Jews hailed the decision to keep Bar Ilan open as a major step forward for democracy in the Jewish state, where less than 20 per cent of the population is Orthodox.

But even Labour Party member Ofir Pinis, which led the effort to keep the road open, agreed the sides will have to continue a dialogue to find a permanent, more acceptable solution to both sides.

"The secular public is willing to give in and is not interested in a cultural war and the transportation minister must create a dialogue of the city's residents," Mr. Pinis said.

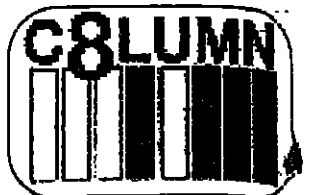
In order to appease the secular public that places high symbolic importance on the road, the government will have to grant them concessions if the road is closed, Mr. Don-Yehiya said.

Such measures would include the construction of another road that would serve as an alternative to Bar Ilan.

Three religious parties represent 23 of the governing coalition's 66-seat majority in the 120-member Knesset, and they control five ministries.

A public commission appointed by the supreme court in August to look into the ultra-Orthodox demands made a temporary decision in November that Bar Ilan should only be closed during prayers on the Sabbath.

But the protesters wanted the road shut for the entire Sabbath — sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.



'Bad guy' wrestler assaults Kuwaiti TV interviewer

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A Kuwaiti television interviewer was assaulted during a live broadcast when he asked an American professional wrestler if his fights were a put-up job. The English-language Arab Times said Sunday. Bassam Al Othman was verbally and physically attacked after he asked World Wrestling Federation (WWF) hulk "Vader" if what he did "was fake" during an interview broadcast live on Saturday. When asked, the 208-kilogramme wrestling giant answered by jumping on Othman, grabbing him by his tie and saying: "Am I faking now?" and continued with a tirade of abuse, the paper said. Othman told the Arab Times he filed an assault case with the local police after the incident, but WWF officials later said Othman had accepted an apology from Vader and explained the outburst as "part of Vader's bad guy persona." The WWF is holding a series of fights in Kuwait for the second year running.

Carreras sings to cheering audience in Beirut

BEIRUT (AP) — After a two-month delay because of the death of his father, Spanish tenor Jose Carreras sang to a full house in Beirut. "You are an extraordinary audience," Carreras told a cheering crowd of about 7,000 people on Saturday night. Tickets for the performance in the Forum de Beyrouth Hall sold for between \$65 to \$200. Carreras sang solos and sometimes duets with soprano Isabella Rey during the four-hour show. The orchestra was conducted by David Gimenez. Forum de Beyrouth is in the Quarantine district, an area that witnessed some of the most savage fighting in the 1975-90 civil war. The concert, that was originally scheduled for Valentine's Day, was postponed because Carreras wanted to be near his ailing father, who later died at a hospital in Barcelona, Spain.

'Jackie Robinson broke colour bar for black athletes'

NEW YORK (AFP) — Former baseball star Hank Aaron, the sport's all-time home run leader, says the late legendary player Jackie Robinson had a sense of mission which black players today lack. In a signed editorial published in Sunday's New York Times, Aaron said Robinson — the first black player in U.S. major league baseball — suffered personal humiliation in breaking the colour bar "for me and all the young black kids like me." Aaron, senior vice president of CNN Airport Network, says Robinson would not approve of the black players' attitude toward the sport today. "I'm sure Jackie would be pleased to see how well black athletes are doing these days. But I suspect he'd want to shake some of them until the dollar signs fell from their eyes so they could once again see straight," writes Aaron in the daily. Robinson, who died in 1972 at the age of 53, was National League rookie of the year in 1947 and the National League's Most Valuable Player in 1949.

Iraq: U.N. delaying medical supplies

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq accused the United Nations on Sunday of delaying medical supplies under Baghdad's oil-for-food deal signed with the world body.

Health Ministry Undersecretary Shawky Marcus said his government had submitted several hundreds of medical contracts but only a few of them had been approved by the U.N. Sanctions Committee on Iraq.

"We submit more than 500 contracts in the health aspect...until today the committee has approved just five per cent of that number," Mr. Marcus told reporters in Baghdad.

Under the deal, which went into effect in December, Iraq is allowed to sell \$2 billion worth of oil to buy food and medicine for its population, suffering from U.N. sanctions imposed for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Foodstuffs bought under the pact have started piling up in Iraq since last month but no medicine has arrived yet.

A U.N. source said this week that no medicine was expected to reach the country until the end of April or beginning of May.

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

said in February that Iraq's health system was close to collapse and urged the Sanctions Committee to speed up its processing of Iraqi contracts for medical supplies.

Who expressed concern that diseases, including malaria and typhoid, threatened to reappear in Iraq. Hospitals lacked basic medicines and electricity to refrigerate vaccines against deadly outbreaks of polio and diphtheria.

"Delaying shipments of medicine and medical supplies means more suffering and more sadness," the Iraqi official said.

Iraq's revenue from the limited oil sales after setting apart 30 per cent for Gulf war reparations and other U.N. costs will be about \$1.3 billion, of which \$210 million were allocated for medicine.

"The actual demands of medicine and the needs in (Iraqi) hospitals are much more than that," Mr. Marcus said.

He said Iraq's medical purchases used to reach an annual amount of \$500 million before the Gulf war while now it was only \$50 to \$60 million a year.

Israeli army defuses bomb in Gaza Strip

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Israeli army said on Sunday it defused a bomb planted at a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip.

"An explosive device which was placed north of greenhouses of the Kfar Darom settlement in the Gaza Strip was found by Israeli army soldiers. A sapper who rushed to the spot defused the device. No one was wounded and there was no damage," the army said in a statement.

Israeli security sources said the explosive device was "large."

Palestinian preventive security chief in the Gaza Strip Mohammad Dahlan disputed the Israeli report. "There was no bomb," he told Reuters.

The Israeli army said in response the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) would have no knowledge of the bomb as it was placed within Kfar Darom settlement limits in an area under Israeli army control.

Israel withdrew from most of Gaza in 1994 under a self-rule peace deal with the PNA but its troops remained to defend several heavily armed settlement enclaves in the Strip.

Palestinian anger has been running high since Israel broke ground on a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem on March 18, touching off a new wave of West Bank unrest.

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